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Contents

The Week 253

Editorials

Little War or Big One?..... 256
Mr. Roosevelt and the Liberals..... 257
"Good Neighbors" in the Orient..... 258
Mark Twain Said It..... 259

General Articles

Working for the Government.....Lindsay Rogers 260
Savings Bank Life Insurance.....Edward Berman 263
The Colleges in Ferment.....James Wechsler 266
When the Insects Came.....Herbert L. Schön 268
Lost Country (verse).....Lionel Wiggam 269
Washington Notes.....T. R. B. 270
Other People's Money.....John T. Flynn 271
Shakespeare in Hollywood.....Otis Ferguson 272

Correspondence 273

Wayward Glamor.....Stark Young 274

Books in Review

Hell Could Freeze Over.....Otis Ferguson 275
Out of His Own Mouth.....C. Hartley Grattan 276
End of the Trail.....Oliver La Farge 276
What Marx Really Meant.....Herman Simpson 277
Ill Fares the Land.....Slater Brown 278
Essays in Defeat.....Leigh White 278
The Doubtful Esthetician.....Edgar Johnson 279
Books in Brief..... 279

The Week

NOTHING has been seen in modern times like the Italian advance in Ethiopia. This is not war; it is murder. It partakes about as much of the old idea of combat as would the action of some sadist who tied a child hand and foot and beat it to death with a club. We are well aware that all war is horrible and that such nonsensical notions as giving your opponent a chance for his life went out with feudalism. We nevertheless believe that the spectacle of half-naked, practically unarmed, semi-savages, men, women and children, being mowed down by machine-guns, tanks and aerial bombardment has shocked and sickened the civilized world, and that the repercussions will cost Italy dear for a long time to come. Airplane bombs have been used against native tribesmen before, notably by the British in Arabia and on India's northwest frontier. Wholesale cruelty has become all too common in the modern world and people now shrug their shoulders at most of it. In spite of all this, the spectacle as Mussolini's men advanced has left an impression that will not soon be eradicated. It is ironic to recall that an important purpose of the campaign was to wipe out the stain on Italy's honor at Adowa in 1896. The new stain is incomparably larger and deeper.

EVENTS of the past few days at Geneva make the happenings in Ethiopia all the more horrible because they are shown to be unnecessary. Even as the League moves for the first time in its history to invoke against Italy the dreaded penalties of Article 16, it seems clear that Mussolini is to have his way in Ethiopia, and that a general European war is, if not averted, at least postponed by some months or years. One is forced to surmise what is going on behind the scenes, but it seems evident that the only sanctions to be invoked against Italy are the economic and financial ones to which Mussolini has already signified his consent. He is gambling, that is, on his ability to settle matters in Africa before his position at home becomes impossible.

IF THE League applies economic and financial sanctions, it will only confirm a situation that already exists. Italy is and has long been a bad credit risk, and she is now obtaining very little money from abroad. She has accumulated war stocks over a period of years, and can survive without serious damage an embargo on imports lasting some months. The result, therefore, is that after Mussolini has killed the number of Ethiopians he thinks proper, he will get from that country substantially what England and France offered him months ago and what Emperor Haile Selassie desperately sought to give him shortly before the guns began to sound. The dead men, women and children of Ethiopia may comfort themselves in their graves by knowing that they are sacrificed to the sense of military punctilio of one who is a master of these delicate points.

GERMANY, of course, was the key to this whole question. No European nation has ever for a moment taken seriously its League obligation, if that obligation conflicted with its national aspirations. M. Laval had made with Mussolini an agreement, the terms of which are not yet known, but one which certainly constituted consent to an Ethiopian policy utterly at variance with both the spirit and

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the letter of the League. Great Britain, alarmed for several reasons, including the fear that Italy might gain control of the Mediterranean, sought from France a united front against Mussolini. France in turn demanded from the British a hard and fast military alliance directed against Germany. To this the British, who meanwhile had realized that by blocking the Suez Canal they could cut Mussolini's own "lifeline" and end his African adventure, refused to consent, though they promised to act if and when definite German aggression had taken place. Thereupon, France refused to give England wholehearted support in case of naval operations that might either be the result of an Italian attack or might constitute part of the application of military sanctions under the League.

IF THE Great Powers have their way, then, there will be no war. Italy will destroy the Ethiopian government, and eventually that country will have a status roughly equal to that of the other African colonies. While this is a bitter blow to those who have believed in the efficacy of the League, it is certainly better than a war which, perhaps beginning as a conflict between Italy and Great Britain, would soon spread to the whole world. Just as no war can ever be defended on moral grounds, so a little war is less evil than a big one. It is possible, of course, that the Powers may have started something they cannot stop. The pressure of opinion at home, or an "incident" somewhere in the Mediterranean, or Mussolini's megalomania, growing by what it feeds on, may bring down general catastrophe. At this moment, however, it seems to us there is slightly better than an even chance that a general war will be averted.

WITHOUT waiting for the League of Nations to decide that a state of war exists between Italy and Ethiopia, President Roosevelt last week-end took three actions in regard to the situation, two of which were practically mandatory under the terms of the neutrality law passed in the closing hours of the last session of Congress. He put into effect an embargo on arms, ammunition or implements of war, using the list previously prepared by the State Department and confined to actual guns, shells, tanks, armored cars, war vessels, airplanes and parts. He also warned Americans not to travel by vessels of either belligerent, a notice which, since Ethiopia has no ships, applied to Italy alone. He added that any American disregarding this injunction did so at his own risk and could not expect the government to make representations on his behalf if he got into trouble. Far more important than either of these declarations was his announcement that any American trading in any commodity with either belligerent does so on his own responsibility. By these few simple words, Mr. Roosevelt swept away the old historic doctrine of "freedom of the seas" in wartime, which did so much to get us into the Great War. He removed perhaps the most serious obstacle to the application of economic sanctions by the League of Nations, since it is well known that Great Britain has steadily refused to undertake such operations if they meant bringing her into conflict with the United States.

THE President deserves wholehearted applause for this decisive step toward keeping the United States out of war, a step not necessitated by the neutrality legislation. Without it, the embargo on munitions would have been a futile gesture, since trade in contraband—cotton, copper, steel, chemicals and even foodstuffs—would have gone on unhindered and would have been a potential source of the greatest international danger. While we welcome the President's action, it seems to us imperatively necessary that the United States should go still further and prohibit the sale of raw materials to all belligerents. Few Americans exporters will forgo the chance to make fat profits merely because trade must now be at their own risk. Even Italy, despite her desperate economic condition, can find the means to support a considerable volume of such trade. It would be easy for us, in a few months' time, to develop a situation where cutting off such trade would mean a violent economic dislocation at home. Once that has happened, our neutrality is gone and the chance of keeping out of conflict is reduced to zero. To isolate ourselves from any and all nations engaged in war is a terribly difficult and expensive business, but it is less difficult and expensive than the alternative, which is almost certainly ultimate participation.

PRESIDENT Roosevelt's two final speeches in California before taking ship for the return to the Atlantic Coast contained several important declarations. In Los Angeles he made the appeal to liberals to unite, discussed elsewhere in this issue of The New Republic, and repeated in detail his general defense of his administration and his assurance that the depression is now ended. At San Diego he warned the world that the United States is resolute in its determination not to get drawn into another war. So far as Europe is concerned, this declaration was implemented shortly afterward by the official declarations regarding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict mentioned above. As to the Far East, however, where the danger of American participation in war is probably ten times as great, Mr. Roosevelt has thus far done little or nothing to reverse the tides that are sweeping us toward conflict. On the contrary, by our naval-building program, and by our generally intransigent attitude regarding the maintenance of the Open Door, we have augmented the likelihood of eventual trouble with Japan.

THIS situation may at any moment become desperately serious. Many competent observers believe that as soon as Great Britain is sufficiently embroiled in the Italian problem, Japan will take another long step forward in her settled policy of dominating

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China, the whole Asiatic coast and even some of the nearby insular possessions of the European powers. There are persistent rumors in Washington and in the Orient that the United States and Great Britain now have a naval agreement for common action in the Pacific, and that American ships are already doing sentry duty in place of British vessels sent from Asiatic waters to the Mediterranean. Such a policy, if it exists, is far too serious to be inaugurated secretly, without giving American public opinion a chance to be heard. The United States has no interest in the Far East, financial or commercial, that is worth the risk of conflict with Japan. It would be simple madness for us to pull Britain's chestnuts out of the fire when her interests and obligations in the Orient are incomparably larger than ours. It is a striking fact that neither the President, the Navy Department nor anyone else ever seeks to justify the policy of entanglement in the Far East. All they do is to proceed, quietly and inexorably, to continue and expand that entanglement.

IN THE United States, politics of various sorts played an important part in the week's news. Mr. Hoover returned to the fray with another indictment of the Roosevelt administration. It was chiefly notable because the ex-President blamed the Democrats for the $22,000,000,000 of public debt that existed when Mr. Roosevelt took office as well as for the subsequent addition to it. Reports are current that the Tories who dominate the Republican Party intend to make a dramatic appeal next year for a "national, coalition government" like that set up by the British Tories in 1931. Arguing that Mr. Roosevelt is a dangerous revolutionist, they would summon the conservatives of both parties to fight him, naming a Republican as presidential nominee, a Democrat like Al Smith for Vice President, and promising in advance that the Cabinet would be equally divided between the two parties. On the eve of the Atlantic City Convention, the executive council of the American Federation of Labor played some politics of its own. It announced a boycott of non-union goods among its members, whose purchases amount to $5,000,000,000 annually. Evincing sharp hostility to the idea of a Labor Party, it further recommended to the membership that all Communists, Communist sympathizers and unions dominated by them shall be expelled from the A.F. of L.

ALMOST daily reports indicate that the Works Progress Administration is going badly. One by one, its fundamental policies are being abandoned, as The New Republic predicted they must be when they were first announced. In many instances, standard hourly union wages are now to be paid to W. P. A. workers. Even the simple projects now contemplated require skills frequently not found among the unemployed, and the officials are therefore going outside the relief rolls to engage workers. Progress is so slow that Washington now freely admits home relief must be continued for a long time for large numbers of people. Mr. Roosevelt's great announcement that one unemployed person in every family on relief would be put to work, and the dole abolished, turns out to have been just another airy political gesture.

WHILE the President was defending his policies on his Western tour, the nine Justices of the Supreme Court were preparing for the session in their handsome new building in Washington, in which they will decide how many of these policies they will permit to continue. It is practically certain that in this session the Court will rule on the A.A.A., the Bankhead cotton-control law, the policy of government loans and gifts to municipal power plants, the right of condemnation proceedings in government housing projects and the sale of electricity to municipalities by the T. V. A. and similar projects. It is probable also that the Court will consider the public-utility holding-company law, the Wagner labor-disputes act, the social-security act and the Guffey law regulating the coal industry. Meanwhile, the government is going ahead with its policy of inviting voluntary codes from industries, roughly similar to those under the old N.R.A., except that on the whole they have even fewer safeguards for labor and the consumer.

THE N.R.A. may be dead, but its ghost appears to have found lodging over in the Federal Trade Commission. We make this observation on the basis of the fair-trade-practice rules that the Commission has just approved for the wholesale tobacco industry. The agreement is the first of the so-called voluntary codes that President Roosevelt has urged industries to establish in order to curb "chiselers," and it is almost a speaking likeness of the old N.R.A. code of the tobacco distributors. The heart of the agreement is contained in the rule that makes it an unfair trade practice (subject to court action) to sell below cost. This does not, of course, provide for outright price fixing, a thing the Commission could hardly reconcile with its chief function, the maintenance of competition. Yet it is well known that industries under the N.R.A. (especially where they were well organized) were able to approach remarkably close to price fixing by stopping sales below cost. For "cost" is extremely ambiguous, and one can be sure that business men interested in boosting prices will always take care that it is set high enough.

IN THE days before the N.R.A., the Commission refused to permit trade-practice rules of this nature. A tobacco wholesaler is quoted in a recent issue of Business Week as saying, "We went after an agreement that would give us everything we had in our code, and we came out with everything we went after, except the clause about exclusive territorial concessions." That seems about right. We note

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only one other omission—Section 7a and provisions on wages and hours. According to reports, these may be included in the voluntary codes, if the industries ask for them and they are approved by President Roosevelt. However, the wholesale tobacco industry neglected to ask for them. Thus it is in the happy position of enjoying virtually all the advantages of its N.R.A. code, without such disadvantages as might be caused by labor provisions. If this is a fair sample of the Federal Trade Commission's work, we predict a rushing business for it. Almost any industry, we suspect, can find some chiselers who should be curbed and some prices that could stand a little boosting.

Little War or Big One?

THE CELEBRATIONS in Rome over the occupation of Adowa have formed as nauseating a spectacle as has been witnessed in a long time. In their advance over the Ethiopian frontier, the Blackshirts were preceded by Negro mercenaries, who combed the hills for snipers, and were the only troops exposed to danger. After a furious long-range artillery bombardment, and operations by swift whippet tanks, the white Italian regiments walked sedately into Adowa and set up camp. Other nations have conducted military campaigns against a virtually unarmed people; the United States conducted such a campaign against Sandino in Nicaragua, and at the present time England is bombing villages along the northern border of India. But never before has a supposedly civilized country regarded these scientific massacres as a proof of its national virility, and a cause for dancing in the streets.

The moral collapse of Fascist Italy, however, is of little importance beside the need for preventing the Ethiopian conflicting from spreading into a European war. On the day that his troops occupied Adowa, Mussolini is reported to have made a fresh peace offer to England. As on previous occasions, he demanded the occupation by Italy of the northern and eastern portions of Ethiopia that lie between Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Haile Selassie's dominions would be reduced to the single province of Amhara, where he would rule as an Italian puppet. However, Mussolini seems to have offered two new concessions. He is prepared not to insist on outright annexation of the territory to be occupied by Italy. Instead, he will accept a temporary protectorate under League auspices, of the same general character as that held by Great Britain over Iraq until 1930. He is also prepared not to maintain a military force in Ethiopia large enough to menace Britain's East African colonies or the Red Sea route to India. Tentatively, he is reported to have suggested a garrison of 30,000 men.

It is evident that no action likely to be taken by the League, at least in the immediate future, will deter Mussolini, and it is possible that England will eventually accept his offer. The chief reason for thinking so is the reluctance of the Laval government to support military sanctions against Mussolini. The deflationary decrees issued last spring by Laval have caused widespread hardship and have vastly sharpened the hostility between the French Fascists under Colonel de la Rocque and the workers in the People's Front. De la Rocque's Croix de Feu has espoused the cause of Mussolini, and made veiled threats of an armed uprising if French soldiers and warships are used to enforce a blockade or military action against Italy. In his domestic policies, Laval's support comes from the right, and he does not dare to take an anti-Italian stand.

But although a settlement of the Ethiopian war within the next eight weeks is likely, it is by no means sure. There are at least two factors, the importance of which cannot be estimated at present. The first is the efficiency of the Italian military machine in Africa. If the Italians advance with unexpected speed, and if the provincial chieftains, in terror, come flocking to them to surrender, Mussolini will grow more intransigent. An agreement between him and England will be much less probable. If, on the other hand, the Italians meet unforeseen difficulties in supplying their armies in the Ethiopian deserts and mountain fastnesses, and are forced to halt their advance, it will be the British who will raise their terms, knowing, as they do, that Mussolini's regime cannot withstand the economic strain of a long campaign.

A second doubtful factor is the negotiations now going on between the Baldwin and Laval governments. France has now suggested that England sign a hard-and-fast military alliance against Hitler, and England appears to be seriously studying this proposal. The French are ready to let England use the great Toulon naval fortress in the event of war in the Mediterranean, thus permitting the British to abandon Malta, if need be, to Mussolini's bombers. In return they ask for aid from England if Hitler upsets the French system of alliances in eastern Europe.

Since the Paris peace conference, innumerable attempts have been made by the French to persuade the British to enter an anti-German alliance. The principal reason for regarding the present negotiations as more significant than those preceding is the remarkable speech of Mr. Baldwin at the Tory Party conference at Bournemouth. Mr. Baldwin pointed out briefly that England has the highest standard of living in Europe, that this standard is dependent on foreign trade, and that, in turn, foreign trade demands that the word of Britain "carry the weight that it always ought to carry and, I hope, always will carry." He then stated with great solemnity that German rearmament has brought "doubts and questionings . . . as to our ability to fulfill our obligations" and that consequently England must rebuild its defenses. This seems a frank admission that England once more regards Germany as its immediate obstacle to world leadership.

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The triumph of obtaining a definite British alliance would unquestionably cause Laval to defy the French Fascists, and break with Mussolini. But alliances have a way of breeding counter-alliances, and an Anglo-French understanding might immediately bring Hitler and Mussolini together. Such a drawing together could at any moment be affected by Mussolini's surrender of Italian interests in Austria in return for Hitler's support of his ambitions in Africa. At least for the present, the Anglo-French combination would be more powerful than the opposing combination of Germany, Italy and Poland, and would still mean that Mussolini would need to come to terms with England over Ethiopia. But before a settlement was reached, Europe would be filled with alarms of war, and, with the British fleet lying within a few hours' steaming of the Italian coast, the danger of incidents would be great. All that is certain in the present situation is that Mussolini's capture of Adowa has rocked Europe to its foundations, that events are moving rapidly, and that the danger of war, while less than it was a month ago, is still very real.

Mr. Roosevelt and the Liberals

WHEN, in his Los Angeles speech, President Roosevelt appealed to American liberals to unite, and not to break up into little sects more concerned with sniping at one another than with a frontal attack on the common enemy, he of course had a direct and political purpose. California is the home of the Epic movement, the Townsendites, the Utopians. Elsewhere in the country there are the followers of Father Coughlin, the supporters of the late Huey Long's "Share-Our-Wealth" movement, the adherents of the La Follettes in Wisconsin, the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota and similar groups. Many of these persons are, or have been, Democrats; large numbers of them voted for Mr. Roosevelt in 1932. Everyone knows that a third-party movement in 1936 would take more votes away from Mr. Roosevelt than from his Republican opponent. It is the simplest good political strategy for him to attempt to keep the progressives within the fold and to bring back as many as possible of those who have strayed.

It must further be said in Mr. Roosevelt's favor that the Republicans are doing their best to make the 1936 election a clear-cut contrast in which their own role will be that of black reaction. If the present group continues to control the G.O.P.—and there is every reason to believe that it will—its program will be "Back to Hooverism." While Mr. Hoover probably will not himself be the candidate, this will not be because his ideas are unacceptable, but because his personality is considered unattractive. In the event of a victory, it is safe to say that as much as possible of the New Deal program will be scrapped, and a good deal more of it than the Republicans will dare to admit during the campaign. The G.O.P. Bourbons show clearly by their every utterance that they have learned nothing, and if they have forgotten anything, it does not include those things that have helped them in the past to make the United States a happy hunting ground for special privilege. If they win, we shall return to the philosophy of trying to spread prosperity "from the top down"—by making the rich so much richer that even the poor will get more crumbs from the table. Labor will be left to fight for amelioration of conditions by its own strength, according to the old laws of the jungle. Such restrictions upon the great corporations as are set up under the banking law, the Securities and Exchange Act, the holding-company law and other measures will be nullified if not repealed. N.R.A. codification will turn openly into cartels operated solely in the interest of business. Yardsticks like the T.V.A. and similar projects will be quietly discarded.

If the progressives' choice were between this sort of America and the America envisaged by Mr. Roosevelt in his public addresses, there would need to be no hesitation. Third-party possibilities would be resolutely rejected on the ground that nothing must be done to encourage the calamity of a Republican victory. But as everyone in the country knows, the choice is not so clear-cut and simple as that. There is a distressing hiatus between the President's promises and his record of achievement. There is an equally distressing discrepancy between the future he seems to envision at certain times and that he foresees at others.

In part, of course, this situation is entirely explicable. Defenders of the President can and do point out the bitter hostility his program of social betterment has encountered on every hand. Most of the leaders of his own party, in House and Senate, are and have been against it. The dominant forces among the Republicans have fought it by fair or foul means from the beginning. The country's agencies for creating public opinion, the press, the radio and the motion picture, are on the whole in the hands of his enemies and have on the whole opposed his efforts. Wall Street and its allies throughout the country constitute our greatest single special interest and they have attacked the President desperately and effectively. Most students of government would agree with Mr. Roosevelt that a general must not get too far in advance of his army, that it is useless to undertake reforms for which public opinion is not yet prepared, that an entering wedge is better than a locked door.

With all these allowances, however, and with the utmost sympathy for the difficulties of the President's position, American progressives cannot forget that the promises made to labor in regard to the right of collective bargaining have been abandoned in every crucial test case. They remember how the N.R.A. was from the beginning perverted from its expressed purpose into a device for price-fixing and price-raising at the expense of the common people. They remember the hundreds of

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millions poured out to maintain unsound corporate structure and rotten banks, to the end that the vast burden of internal private debt has been largely perpetuated at the same time that the public debt has been increased to a staggering degree.

They remember a whole series of sudden, violent and largely meaningless changes of policy in regard to public works and relief for the unemployed, the net result of which has been the expenditure of many billions of dollars with shockingly little to show for it in the form of accomplished public works and relief that has never at any time or anywhere maintained the unemployed at a decent minimum standard of life. They remember three successive "truces with business" which have seemed to mean at least a temporary repudiation of his program by the President himself. They have seen this country move steadily toward a perfectly unnecessary, insane war with Japan through a program the naval aspect of which is now costing the nation a billion dollars a year. Remembering these things, and remembering also that if Mr. Roosevelt is reëlected he cannot possibly hope for a renewal of the overwhelming prestige and power with which he began his first administration, they feel forced to ask him: Is it really true that the American liberals ought to enroll under your banner? Have they not the right, on the contrary, to ask that you enroll under theirs?

"Good Neighbors" in the Orient

THE COUNTRY is now in the grip of peace hysteria. There is no public leader who is not eager to stand flatfootedly against war. Mr. Roosevelt has not only forbidden Americans to travel on Italian and Ethiopian ships, except at their own risk, but has warned Americans from business dealings with either country. This is as far as he could go under the recent neutrality act, and the earnestness of his purpose is only slightly minimized by the fact that Ethiopia has no ships, and our commerce with Ethiopia is negligible.

We ought not think, however, that by kindling in ourselves this fire of hatred against war we have secured the country against foreign involvements. We do not hate war more sincerely now than we did, for example, in 1914. We ought to take warning from the last war that emotion in itself, no matter how righteous, is not enough to safeguard us. In 1914, what this country lacked was not moral purpose, but intelligent planning. It was confronted with the hard fact that England was determined to blockade Germany, and that Germany had to break the blockade with its submarines or accept defeat. The rational conclusion to be drawn from this situation was that if we wished to preserve our neutral rights at sea, we would be compelled to fight for them.

As we all know, this situation was never presented clearly to the people of the country. By the end of 1916, emotions ranging from the acutely selfish to the nobly idealistic had become aroused, and the country was unable to judge dispassionately where its real interests lay. The danger that exactly this same process will occur again is as great as ever, and Mr. Roosevelt's neutrality proclamation has not reduced it in any appreciable degree.

The threat of war now lies in the Far East, not in Europe. The weakness of the neutrality act passed at the last session of Congress is that it is directed solely toward Europe. It is framed to prevent the growth of another great munitions-export trade with England, and to prevent Americans being drowned in the sinking of another "Lusitania." It is conspicuously a case of locking the stable door not merely after the horse is stolen, but after horses generally have been supplanted by automobiles.

The reason it is unlikely that within the next few years we shall be dragged into a European war, is solely that long before the question arose of our joining one or another set of belligerents in Europe, we would be faced with an acute war issue of our own in Asia. It must be recognized that Japanese policy is utterly changed from what it was in 1914. In those days the prestige of America and England in Japan was immense, and their power was considered illimitable. All through the first year of the World War, Japan faithfully guarded the Asiatic interests of its ally, Britain. Not until some time in 1915 did the Japanese suddenly suspect that England's effective naval power in the Pacific had sunk to approximately the level of Siam. Even then, because of their awe of the United States, the Japanese hesitated. Only when we were hopelessly involved in the German submarine controversy did they begin their diplomatic march on Pekin.

The recent boasting at Tientsin of Major General Hayao Tada need not be taken at full value for us to realize that Japan, in the event of another general war, will move at once. Because of our extra-territorial "rights" in China—the fruits of our own imperialism a generation ago—the Japanese cannot tighten their grip on the Chinese government without soon infringing on our treaty privileges. They cannot achieve a dominant position in China without violating our supposed "rights" more ruthlessly than Germany did in her submarine campaign.

If we hope to prevent war, all this should be foreseen and publicly acknowledged, and the country should be given the opportunity to decide the course of action it wants to take. What, in fact, is the policy that the country is now pursuing toward Japan? Mr. Roosevelt has refused the Japanese claim to naval equality, and hinted that in the future we will build five naval units to every three Japan builds. There is no intention here of repeating the strong arguments that exist in favor of permitting Japan to have a fleet equal to ours. The point to be emphasized is that our present policy leads

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straight to a naval-building race, and that a building race means incessant friction and bad feeling between the United States and Japan. Advocates of peace in this country, if they are to be realistic, must face the fact that until the Japanese-American naval question is settled, in one way or another, no formal policy of neutrality is valid.

If we could look forward to a period of stability and peace in the rest of the world, we might hope that the influence of Russia and England—especially Russia—in the Far East would serve to restrain Japan from any sudden action in China. This is, however, precisely what we cannot rely on. Whatever the outcome of the present Ethiopian crisis may be, the indications are that Europe is entering a long interval of intrigue and unrest. At present, it is possible to consider the situation in the Far East with relative calmness. We now occupy the top position, commercially, in China, and in 1934 sold nearly twice as much there as Japan and England together. The total of our exports and imports to and from China, now abnormally depressed, is around $100,000,000. In the event of Japan's carrying out its plans for the penetration of China, we should undoubtedly lose part of this trade, and Japan would probably require that most of the rest of it be conducted through Japanese agencies. This is what we would sacrifice. The question that the country should decide, and decide immediately, is whether this trade is worth a war. Today the answer would be vociferously negative. But once Europe is at war, no such simple question will be presented. The equivalent of the "Lusitania" incident will have taken place, and we shall be asked to choose on issues of humanity and national honor. In that choice, the pious sentiments in which the country is now reveling will have little weight.

Mark Twain Said It

THIS seems to us a good week to reprint two famous documents by Mark Twain. They are often quoted, but not often enough, as events of the past few days in Ethiopia demonstrate. The first of these is his description of the development of war hysteria, written many years ago and published in "The Mysterious Stranger":

> There has never been a just one, never an honorable one—on the part of the instigator of the war. I can see a million years ahead, and this rule will never change in so many as half a dozen instances.
>
> The loud little handful—as usual—will shout for the war. The pulpit will, warily and cautiously, object—at first; the great, big, dull bulk of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war, and will say, earnestly and indignantly, "It is unjust and dishonorable, and there is no necessity for it."
>
> Then the handful will shout louder. A few fair men on the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech and pen, and at first will have a hearing and be applauded; but it will not last long; those others will outshout them, and presently the anti-war audiences will thin out and lose popularity.
>
> Before long you will see this curious thing: the speakers stoned from the platform and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at one with those stoned speakers—as earlier—but do not dare to say so.
>
> And now the whole nation—pulpit and all—will take up the war cry, and shout itself hoarse, and mob any honest man who ventures to open his mouth; and presently such mouths will cease to open.
>
> Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them; and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just, and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception.

The other document is his famous "War Prayer," written thirty years ago and recently circulated again by the Mark Twain Centennial Committee:

> O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended through wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sport of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it—for our sakes, who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask of One who is the spirit of love and who is the ever faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset, and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Grant our prayer, O Lord, and Thine shall be the praise and honor and glory, now and ever. Amen.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Working for the Government

I: *Toward a Better Public Service Personnel*

FROM NUMEROUS quarters attention is now being centered on the personnel of the American public service and on plans for its improvement. The moment is peculiarly appropriate, for the need is much more pressing than it has been on previous occasions when similar interest has been manifested and comparable plans have been drawn up. Government services have expanded vastly and are not likely to diminish materially. Their tasks are more complicated and more important. The word "bureaucracy" is more and more frequently used in print and in conversation. To some the now common term is an unbiased description *faute de mieux*. To others it is an epithet, to still others a bugaboo, and to the American Liberty League although (or perhaps because) the language is trite, a monster pressing its fangs into the body politic.

Many Democrats who believe themselves deserving continue to ask Mr. Farley to let them be bureaucrats. The number in Washington increases steadily. College youths, with the traditional professions decidedly less attractive than of yore, note that one out of every forty inhabitants in this country (one out of every ten gainfully employed) is now on the public payroll and wonder whether another profession, or at least a job, may not be around the corner. Colleges and universities hear the "call," hastily revise their curricula and announce new schools. A Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel, set up by the Social Science Research Council, has issued a report[1] buttressed by an imposing array of monographs. After a careful analysis of the problem, the Commission makes a series of recommendations which, in essence, urge competitive examinations for all posts except those in the judiciary, the military and naval services, and a small political or major policy-determining group; more intelligent attention to promotions, transfers, pensions; and the creation of a career service on the model of the famous administrative class in the English civil service.

Despite the fact that this program is not startling, or even novel, the report has been received with enthusiasm. It has achieved the distinction of a cheap edition for wide distribution. Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, branches of the League of Women Voters, welfare workers, societies of engineers and many other groups are adopting resolutions and are taking up the refrain that the merit system must be extended and that the public service must be improved. The detonations are by no means at an end. There is much smoke. How large will be the fire?

At the center of the smoke is the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel. The model for the Commission was English—the royal commission—and the reasons underlying its imitation by an extra-governmental agency in this country warrant brief comment. What was wanted was a thorough consideration of facts and data by able persons who had some competence, or at least interest, in the subject matter; agreement, so far as possible, on a practicable program, and the publication of a report that would ignore the political party affiliations of its signatories. Problems appropriate for such treatment are in England handed over to royal commissions or to committees under the Speaker or the Lord Chancellor. In the United States it has been well nigh impossible for the politicians to keep hands off a governmental committee of inquiry to the extent that the politicians do in Great Britain. This results partly from the nature of our governmental system and partly from the ignorance of our political leaders. Too few of them have learned that in their own interests they should remain aloof. Frequently it is to their advantage to take a matter out of current political controversy and to hand it over to a body that will deal with it in a non-parti-

[1] It has been impossible for me to particularize, in this article, the "imposing array of monographs" that supports the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Personnel. To the report itself are appended digests of state and federal civil-service laws and several statistical analyses of the public service (the most important one prepared by Clarence Heer). First among the monographs is "A Bibliography of Civil Service and Personnel Administration," by Sarah Greer. In "Civil Service Abroad," four high authorities discuss the distinctive features of the British, Canadian, French and German services: Leonard D. White, Charles H. Eland, Walter R. Sharp and Fritz Morstein Marx. The German sections, although somewhat diffuse, are especially interesting because Mr. Marx, a member of the service until the advent of Hitler, deals with the changes under National Socialism.

"Problems of the American Public Service" includes five monographs. Carl J. Friederich contributes a highly theoretical essay on "Responsible Government Service under the American Constitution." William C. Beyer writes on the municipal civil service. Employer-employee relationships are the subject of Sterling D. Spero, who is an authority on organizations of government employees in the United States. Veteran-preference laws receive careful analysis at the hand of John F. Miller, and George A. Graham discusses personnel practices. A study entitled "Training Public Employees in Great Britain" was begun by Harvey Walker before the Commission was appointed but is published in the monograph series. To be published this month (by the McGraw-Hill Book Company) are the "Minutes of Evidence" and "Government by Merit: An Analysis of the Problem of Government Personnel," in which Lucius Wilmerding, Jr., will state what he thinks should be done to make bureaucracy more efficient.

In "Government Career Service" (University of Chicago Press) Leonard D. White argues that certain positions in the federal service should be considered as corresponding to those held by members of the administrative class of the British Civil Service and should receive separate treatment.—L. R.

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san fashion. Never are they able to gain any real advantage out of interfering with such a commission. Ex-President Hoover must have learned this lesson from the Wickersham Commission.

For some years American research in the social sciences has been well financed—some would maintain so well financed that a great deal of useless research has been attempted and was justified only to the extent that it provided employment for research workers who might otherwise have gone on relief. Some excellent research has been left unimplemented. The facts turned up have had uncompleted meanings. Believing that the device of a commission might enable research to be given a more immediate meaning, and a program of action to be formulated, the Social Science Research Council sponsored two experiments: commissions on international economic policy and on public-service personnel. Both commissions justified their existence.

In comparison with a royal commission, the American inquiries had both advantages and disadvantages. A royal commission on the civil service would have spent several hundred pounds. The American commission spent $70,000, contributed by the Spelman Fund. A royal commission is appointed and given specific terms of reference by the King—that is by the government of the day. The Commission on Public Service Personnel was designated by the Social Science Research Council. Terms of reference were vague but the Commission had the blessing of a letter from President Roosevelt, endorsing the idea behind it. A royal commission would have been staffed in the main by civil servants and the bulk of the memoranda presented would have come from government departments, or, if foreign experience was to be surveyed, through His Majesty's representatives abroad. The Secretary of the American Commission was Luther Gulick, Columbia professor and director of the Institute of Public Administration. The supporting monographs were prepared by university men. Witnesses appearing before a British commission would have presented careful *précis* of the evidence they were prepared to give and then would have been interrogated on the basis of their special interests and competencies. The American commission thought of its hearings partly in terms of publicity. Witnesses to whom the idea of the commission was novel were sometimes coy. In Great Britain the commission's recommendations would have been presented to the government, which, after waiting for public reactions, would have determined how far and how rapidly it would attempt to carry the recommendations out. The American commission reported to the public. A cynic has estimated that in Great Britain, when a royal commission makes unanimous recommendations, more than a decade is required to translate them to the statute book. When there is a minority report, a much longer time is required. It is a habit of democratic institutions not to take all steps at once. Laments should not be too loud, for gradualness of movement may be essential if institutions are to remain democratic.

The problems posed by the report and supporting monographs range near and far. Here it is possible to do no more than comment in summary (and hence perhaps dogmatic) fashion on certain questions that emerge:

1. Blueprints are ready for extensive improvements of the public service, which now, apart from posts open to specialists (engineers, public health, etc.), offers few opportunities for a career in the sense of profession, permanence and hierarchy. In the regular civilian establishments of the federal government 461,000 posts are now filled by competitive examinations. One hundred and thirty thousand posts are exempt. Of the nearly one hundred thousand employees of the new agencies, about ten percent are under civil service. "In seeking for employment luck is everything," said one of the characters in "Don Quixote." That is true of Washington, with the qualification that the luck is frequently in politics, sometimes in personal acquaintanceship, and occasionally in special competence. Of the quarter-million employees of the states, about ninety thousand are covered by a merit system but are confined to nine of the forty-eight units. Of 355 cities with more than 25,000 population, only 200 have civil services and 35 of the systems apply only to firemen and policemen.

The idea of merit, impartially determined, still lacks general acceptance. It would doubtless be a step forward if the exempted classes in the federal services—postmasters, marshals, deputy collectors of internal revenue—were put under the civil service, but our bureaucracy would not thereby become strikingly more efficient. The wave of interest now centers on the federal service because there the expansion has been most spectacular, the need for trained men more acute and the opportunities for responsible jobs much more evident. When lack of coördination at the top is manifest and when incompetence in the ranks becomes known, a contrast is drawn with Great Britain and it is pointed out that, save for the highest political posts, the whole of Whitehall is under the merit system. A few more than a thousand highly placed permanent officials constitute an administrative class, just before appointment the cream of university graduates, and thereafter worthy of attention when one ponders John Chipman Gray's famous remark that the real rulers of a political society are undiscoverable. Had Great Britain set up numerous recovery agencies, the men for key positions would have been drawn from this administrative class. In the United States they were taken from outside the regular government service. It is this administrative class and the possibilities of creating a comparable group in the United States that are now subjects of much discussion.

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2. Something along these lines may be possible. There are now in the federal civil service a number of posts comparable to the British posts occupied by members of the administrative class. Leonard D. White, one of the United States Civil Service Commissioners, has proposed that a schedule of perhaps two thousand posts (the number seems much too high) should be prepared and that they should be recognized as adaptable for special handling—as administrative posts "subject in the future to separate and distinct and more rigid conditions of service than those which have hitherto been applied to these positions as positions." Some of the posts are now under civil service. Others could be covered in by Executive Order.

The present appointees, even though many of them are not of the administrative-class type, could be the charter members of a career service. Recruitment of persons to take their places could begin at once—recruitment from within and from without the civil service. White has proposed two hundred and fifty appointments per year, subject to a five-year probationary period at the end of which perhaps one hundred appointments would be made permanent. For the initial period, half the appointments could be made from within the service and half from without. This would mean that the colleges would be called upon to furnish annually one hundred or more graduates from the annual output of one hundred thousand. Presumably the seventeen thousand persons who annually receive higher degrees would be eligible to compete. Seventy men were appointed to the administrative classes of British civil service in 1933, but some were holdovers from previous examinations.

3. Such a plan is feasible, not open to serious political objections, and may, therefore, receive congressional and presidential sanction. But if the merit system is extended both up and down, and if men of the administrative-class type are brought into the public service, one is entitled to ask just how much more efficient bureaucracy would thereby become. Across the Atlantic, the administrative class has been successful, not only because the recruits were men of outstanding abilities, but because the British system was so geared that Ministers realized their need for the class and could use it to full advantage.

Before the bureaucracy in Washington can really be efficient, Congress will have to step into the background. We should not talk about improving our public service without remembering that the British civil service was able to become as efficient as it has because it is not controlled in detail by Parliament. Lump sums are voted for the different services. Under the famous Order in Council of 1920, "the Treasury may make regulations for controlling the conduct of His Majesty's civil establishments and providing for the classification, remuneration and other conditions of service of all persons employed therein, whether permanently or temporarily." In Washington, the regular departments operate under line-by-line congressional appropriation acts, and they are thereby always delayed in, and many times estopped from, attaining an increased efficiency.

But if Congress gave the Bureau of the Budget as much authority as the British Treasury has over the civil service, there would still be limits on the efficiency the bureaucracy could hope to demonstrate. "Perhaps one of the essential ingredients most lacking in comprehensive American thought is appreciation of what a skilled administration means in the task of government." This is the considered opinion of Sir Josiah Stamp. He found here "little sense of the truth that administration is both a tradition and a technique." Why is this the case?

In part, the answer is to be found in the absence here of the factors that led in considerable measure to the British reforms of seventy years ago. Mr. White thinks that why these reforms "took place in the fifteen years from 1855 to 1870 is not easy to explain in terms of specific causes. Neither economic pressure nor public demand for retrenchment and reorganization, such as has been effective in the United States for the past fifteen or twenty years, nor fear concerning the safety of democratic institutions, such as forced reform in this country fifty years ago, counted for much in the reform period in Great Britain."

One explanation is not unconnected with the reason why England, before the merit system, escaped rotation in office. Those who got posts, no matter how incompetent, were able, barring great scandal, to hold on until death or resignation. This was the logical consequence of a Cabinet system of government with the Cabinet holding office so long as it maintained the confidence of the House of Commons and with the minority being prepared to form a government in the event that it forced the Cabinet's overthrow. Officials had to be retained because the incoming Minister had instant need of their services. They were necessary to assist him in the duel with Parliament that would begin at once. He would doubtless think that some of his own friends might prove to be more competent than the persons he found in his department, but how could he persuade his friends to accept posts if their tenure was to be as uncertain as his own? In the United States an incoming administration can look ahead to four years—in many cases to eight years. Hence a sweep can be made with certainty that the resulting incompetence will at least be lessened by the time of the next election.

Similarly, the British form of government helped to force the steps that led to the competitive system and a special class of well trained university men, with alert, adaptable minds. The business of government became much more complex around the middle of the century. The defense of administrations in the House of Commons could be less impromptu. More and more legislation was prepared

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in the departments. There was a growing conviction that the subordinates, whose wholesale dismissal would risk chaos, could better serve the government if they were more efficient. The collective responsibility of the Ministers meant that each was concerned about administrative derelictions in his colleagues' departments. Those who believed that administration should be "both a tradition and a technique" could bring pressure on their unconvinced colleagues.

The situation in the United States is entirely different. If General Johnson had had to defend price-fixing provisions on the floor of Congress, he would have checked the carelessness of some of his deputies in this respect. With collective responsibility all members of the Cabinet would have been concerned. Under the American form of government, administrative reforms have no institutional stimulus such as they had in Great Britain. There is plenty of competence in Washington—in the regular departments as well as in the newer agencies—but too often it is unhonored, unsung and even unrecognized. Much of it is not now in the posts that Mr. White would segregate. If Congress would relinquish its meticulous financial control—even with a reduction of total appropriations for personnel—heroic administrators like those Carlyle demanded a century ago could do much to make departmental bureaucracies individually more efficient. The much more important question of direction and coördination would still remain. Meanwhile blueprints are likely to gather dust. This view is jaundiced. If it is myopic, so much the better.

LINDSAY ROGERS.

This is the first of two articles on government personnel by Professor Rogers. The second will appear in an early issue.—THE EDITORS.

Savings Bank Life Insurance

Recent events have focused public attention upon the relationship between the government and the whole question of security for the individual, particularly as it is represented in old-age pensions and life insurance. As is well known, the great life-insurance companies of the United States took the keenest interest in the debate over the new Social Security Law and sought modifications of its provisions. This is therefore an interesting moment at which to recall a little known but markedly successful experiment in the life-insurance field, the system under which, in Massachusetts, savings banks have for the last twenty-seven years been writing insurance of this type.—THE EDITORS.

ONE WAY to reduce life-insurance costs is to permit savings banks to write insurance. This system has been tried in the state of Massachusettts since 1908. So interesting have been the results that the Bureau of Labor Statistics has made an exhaustive study of the system and a detailed examination of its workings as compared with those of private insurance companies. The report of the Bureau was recently issued, and the present article is in part a summary of its more important findings. Attempts of insurance-company officials to bring about the passage of laws intended to handicap savings-bank life insurance and their readiness to offer criticisms when proposals for similar systems are made in other states, are signs that the system has become an important competitor of the old-line companies.

In 1929 the savings banks in Massachusetts had in force over $67,500,000 of life insurance. In 1933 the amount had increased to $93,187,000, and by the end of June, 1935, it had reached the figure of more than $107,300,000. In other words, in a period of five and one-half years there was an increase of 59 percent in the total amount of insurance in force. Between 1929 and 1933 the private insurance companies experienced a decrease in the amount of insurance they had in force in Massachusetts of from $4,423,300,000 to $4,420,000,000. The amounts in force with the banks may appear at first glance to be insignificant when compared with the total amount of insurance in force with the private companies, but the relative growth of the system shows clearly why the companies are concerned.

It is easy enough to explain why savings-bank life insurance continues to grow, even during a period of depression, while life-insurance companies are, with few exceptions, suffering from a decline in their business. In the first place it is possible to obtain life insurance from the savings banks at net costs very much lower than those charged by the private companies. A common way of measuring the net cost of insurance is to add up the premiums paid during a certain period of years, and to subtract from these the dividends received by the policy-holders and the cash value obtained if the policy is surrendered at the end of the period. If one assumes the policy to be in force for ten years and divides the above result by ten it is possible to find out what the actual average annual cost of carrying the insurance (excluding interest) has been during the ten-year period.

Estimating costs to the policy-holders on this basis, one finds that a $1,000 straight life-insurance policy issued in the year 1924 at the age of thirty-five and surrendered in 1934 would have cost on the average $2.29 per year in the savings banks

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and $5.33 per year with the ten most important ordinary life-insurance companies. The average yearly net cost, excluding interest, for a twenty-year-payment life-insurance policy for $1,000 issued under the same conditions was 25 cents for the savings banks and $3.51 for the ten companies. For a twenty-year endowment policy the savings-bank policy-holder would actually have received a surplus in excess of all his costs (exclusive of interest) equal to $5 a year, while in the case of the ten companies the insurance would have cost him 35 cents a year. These contrasts have to do only with ordinary insurance.

A much sharper contrast is presented in the case of industrial insurance, sold generally to workers, the premiums for which are collected weekly at the homes of the insured. The savings banks do not sell industrial insurance, but it is possible for a person to pay monthly premiums for a small ordinary insurance policy taken from the banks. The industrial companies charge for $276 of straight-life industrial insurance issued at the age of thirty-five an annual premium of $10.40. The savings-bank premium for the same amount of insurance is $6.96. The dividends paid by the savings banks are much larger than those paid on industrial policies, despite the fact that they charge smaller premiums. As a consequence, the net cost of carrying the insurance for the ten-year period, assuming the policies are surrendered for their cash value at the end of that time, would be $10.73 on the average for the savings banks, $56.72 in the case of one industrial company and $57.52 in the case of a second.

There is another important reason, however, for the greater attractiveness of savings-bank life insurance. The terms of its policies are in general more favorable than those offered by the insurance companies. The banks pay cash-surrender values after a policy has been in force for as little as six months, and in some instances even earlier. As a rule the private companies do not pay cash-surrender values on ordinary policies until after the second year. Industrial policies in the past could not be surrendered for cash until after they had been in force ten years. The industrial life-insurance companies, however, offer certain privileges, such as double indemnity in case of accidental death and disability income, which are not available to savings-bank policy-holders.

The low net cost of savings-bank insurance is probably the most important factor in its continued growth. The extent to which large dividends can be returned to policy-holders depends in the long run upon three factors: (1) the mortality experience of a particular insurance establishment, (2) the rate of interest it earns upon its invested assets, and (3) its expenses of operation. In each of these respects the insurance departments of the savings banks have a great advantage over the private insurance companies.

A most important factor is the unusually low operating expense. For example, in 1934 the operating expense of the insurance departments of the savings banks was 4.85 percent of premium income. The expense in the case of ordinary insurance sold by the private companies was 13.95 percent of premium income, and in the case of industrial insurance it was 23.9 percent.

Opponents in the past have been especially critical of the figures on expenses of operation of the savings-bank insurance system. They point out that during the greater part of its history the expenses of operating the Division of Savings Bank Life Insurance, which supervises the insurance business of the banks and has its offices in the State House, have been paid by the taxpayers of Massachusetts. This sum, however, was only 2.18 percent of the total premium income for the entire period from 1907 to 1933. In 1927 the insurance departments of the banks began to reimburse the Commonwealth for the expenses of the Division. Since 1934, the entire expense of operating the system has been borne by the insurance departments of the banks themselves. From that year on, therefore, no part of the low cost of operating the savings-bank insurance system can be ascribed to any alleged subsidy from the taxpayer. Despite this fact, the ratio of expenses to premium income was lower in 1934 than it was in 1932-33.

In recent years the most persistent criticism of savings-bank insurance has been devoted to a so-called "subsidy" paid by the depositors of the banks to the policy-holders. The essence of this criticism is that many of the insurance departments of the banks have either paid no share of the salaries and rents incurred by the savings banks or that the share borne by them has been much less than was equitable. They have asserted that as a result the burden of expenses borne by the savings departments, and thus ultimately by the depositors, is greater than it should be, and that as a consequence the savings banks' policy-holders have been able to get insurance at a low cost.

It is true that new insurance departments in some of the banks have not borne what might be regarded as a proper share of the joint expenses of operating the banks. Investigation of the records of the banks for the year 1933 shows, however, assuming that ledger assets of the savings and of the insurance departments constitute a proper basis for distributing joint costs, that as a whole the insurance departments have more than paid their share of the joint expenses of the banks. The fact that some of the newer banks have paid too small a proportion has been more than offset by the fact that most of them have paid more than they should have done. In other words, for the system as a whole it is much more accurate to say that the policy-holders have subsidized the depositors rather than that the depositors have subsidized the policy-holders.

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The companies have frequently claimed that the low expense of operation of the savings-bank insurance system has been due in part to the fact that the banks are taxed on a different basis from that used in taxing the companies and that they are exempt from the payment of federal income tax. An investigation indicates that the companies have generally paid out in taxes and fees an amount equal to about two percent of their premium income, whereas the insurance departments of the banks during the period from 1908 to 1933 have paid out about one-half of one percent. In this respect, therefore, it is clear that the companies are at a disadvantage. It has also been asserted that the Massachusetts Savings Bank Insurance League has spent large sums of money to promote the sale of insurance. However, an investigation shows the amount so spent to be of no great importance.

If one were to add up all of these differences, that is, a little over two percent paid in the past by the Commonwealth to maintain the Division of Savings Bank Life Insurance in the State House, something less than one percent incurred by the Savings Bank Insurance League, and about 1.5-percent disadvantage incurred by the insurance companies in the payment of taxes, the total amounts to about 4.5 percent of premium income. With this total, however, it is still clear that savings banks operate at expense ratios less than those of the private companies. In view of the fact that the contribution of about two percent from the state has ceased to exist, one can find an advantage of no more than 2.5 percent. The real difference is still smaller, however, since in the savings-bank system as a whole the insurance departments have met more than their proper share of the joint expenses of operating the savings banks. The assertion that savings-bank policy-holders enjoy a low cost because they are to a considerable extent subsidized by the taxpayers or by the depositors or by wealthy citizens who support the Savings Bank Insurance League is clearly incorrect.

The real truth of the matter is that the system is operated more efficiently than are the private insurance companies. The most important factor is the absence of especially large expenditures in the form of commissions that accompany the agency systems maintained by the companies. No one receives a commission for the sale of savings-bank insurance. There are no agents receiving at least 50 percent of the first year's premium and five percent of the annual premiums for each of the next nine years, and no general agents, under whom the former work, who receive 15 percent of the first year's premiums, 10 percent of the second year's premiums, and 2.5 percent of all annual premiums thereafter, while the insurance is in force.

The savings banks operate their insurance departments in order to provide their policy-holders with protection at low cost, rather than to sell insurance, a large share of the cost of which goes to the persons whose only job is to sell it. The facts from the official records speak for themselves. In 1931 the percentage of total income expended for salaries by the insurance departments of the banks was 2.32 percent. By contrast the percentage devoted to salaries and commissions in the same year by four important companies was 10.72 percent in their ordinary insurance departments. In the case of their industrial-insurance departments the percentage was 15.76 percent.

If one were to discover only that savings-bank insurance costs relatively little and that its terms are generally more advantageous to the policy-holders than the insurance sold by the private companies, the advantages of the system would appear sufficiently convincing. A person who buys insurance, however, generally buys it in order to protect his family in case of death or to provide an endowment. To what extent have the savings-bank policies actually fufilled the purpose for which the insurance was taken out in the first instance? When a policy is terminated by lapse, that is, when it ceases to have effect because premium payments have been discontinued, it has failed very largely to accomplish the purpose for which it was bought. It is true that during the period the premiums were being paid the insured was protected, but his failure to continue paying premiums is in general clear evidence that the original intention is not being carried out. During the period of 1908 to 1931, out of all the new insurance written the ratio of insurance lapsed was 2.6 percent in the case of the savings banks, 21 percent in the case of ordinary insurance purchased from the private companies, and 54.5 percent in the case of industrial insurance. In the year 1933 the percentages were 2.8 percent for the savings banks, 46.3 percent for ordinary insurance sold by the private companies, and 52.8 percent for industrial insurance.

The savings banks' low lapse ratios are due to the fact that there is not likely to be overselling of savings-bank insurance in the absence of eloquence on the part of insurance agents. Also, the possibility of obtaining loans at the end of a year and the non-forfeiture privileges, including cash surrender after six months, assure the policy-holders of receiving some return for their money at an early period in case they fail to continue premium payments.

The rapid growth of savings-bank life insurance in Massachusetts is due to its fundamental soundness, its extraordinary advantage to the policy-holder in the form of low costs and advantageous terms, and to the social efficiency with which the system is conducted. If the private insurance companies truly desire to meet the growing competition of savings-bank insurance they can do it in only one way that is socially sound and economically justifiable. They can proceed to the business of setting their own houses in order and of furnishing life insurance under such conditions that the policy-holder is not compelled to support an army of agents.

EDWARD BERMAN.

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Ferment in the Colleges

WHEN A noted English scholar toured the American campus in 1931, he was profoundly dismayed by undergraduate apathy to "politics." The observer was Professor Harold Laski, his thesis, "Why Don't Your Young Men Care?" To him the extraordinary fact about our university life was this refusal of students to assume the "robes of statesmanship." It should be noted that the visitor was speaking of "politics" primarily in terms of its conventional instruments: the Republican and Democratic Parties. His impression was indisputably valid; but it was only part of a larger truth. The American student in 1931 was no less interested in "politics" than in anything else that extended beyond his own immediate horizon. If there were occasional clusters of "intellectuals" worrying about their souls, the average collegian was pondering the outlook for Saturday's football war. Although these are familiar items, they are peculiarly relevant to what has occurred in the ensuing four years.

There is a ferment now. One may dispute its scope and meaning but the fact of its existence is plain. And still the boycott of "politics," in its orthodox sense, endures. There are no hundreds of young men and women rushing from commencement exercises to the doors of neighborhood Republican and Democratic clubs. Instead, a multitude of "movements" have been projected into prominence, far overshadowing the efforts of the two established parties. These blocs are diverse and widely distributed; if there is a common denominator among them, it is the conviction that the old instruments are inadequate to the needs and distress of students and young people generally. I am not suggesting that the colleges have ceased to turn out their quotas of Democratic and Republican voters; but the dynamic, active currents on the campus are almost invariably outside the ancient fold. This survey will seek to indicate the outlines, influence and direction of the most conspicuous movements in our universities; I must emphasize that those discussed here are representative but not all-inclusive.

This listing logically begins at the left, because it is unmistakably true that the radical wing has made the most notable and sustained inroads. That it has done so is, to some extent at least, the result of a head start; when only the first murmurings of concern for social issues were audible, the insurgents were endeavoring to crystallize undergraduate opinion. There are two outstanding organizations in this camp—the Student League for Industrial Democracy and the National Student League. The former is the outgrowth of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, founded about thirty years ago, and has maintained a predominantly socialist orientation and personnel. In the post-war decade the L.I.D. could make little headway on a campus that regarded capitalism as a static, enduring and satisfying order. About three years ago, however, a student section was officially designated, shifting a part of the group's emphasis from middle-class liberals to the university; at that time a program on specific campus issues was enunciated.

The National Student League emerged from a cleavage in the L.I.D. which reached a climax in 1931. Many Communist students had a share in founding the League, but their essential principle was supported by more heterogeneous groups: they agreed that there was increasing need for a movement unattached to any political party and devoted more definitely to the individual issues and problems of the student. There were many ramifications to the dispute too lengthy to be detailed here; in many respects it mirrored the lamentable divisions of the entire left-wing movement. It is highly significant, therefore, that amalgamation of the two bodies now seems a real possibility. Committees recently spent many weeks in discussing such a step and in their deliberations preliminary accord was reached. Although final action will not be taken until the national conventions in December, there is real ground for believing that unity will be achieved at that time. The reconciliation is premised, first, upon the fact that the organizations have been almost completely identified in tactics and procedure during the past two years and, perhaps more important, the realization that continued separation may result in the extermination of both by a right-wing avalanche.

The program of both groups is based upon the belief that capitalism can no longer provide a sane or secure future for the bulk of students, drawn as they are from a "sinking middle class." The student's plight is becoming analogous to that of the working and farming population; the solution rests in an alliance with these on immediate issues and in the ultimate realignment of social forces in a collectivist structure. Upon that groundwork their analysis of the student's relation to society and his educational environment is built. Thus, the school is viewed as an instrument of the dominant social classes, represented by boards of trustees. The "weeding out" of dissenters on the campus is cited as the local counterpart of approaching fascism; the increased prestige and aggrandizement, by administrators, of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps is held to be symptomatic of wider omens of war. The perils of the setting are further augmented, it is charged, by curtailment of educational facilities and intensified discrimination against the Negro—both linked to the advance of reaction.

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Together the membership of both organizations does not total more than 6,000, and yet it is clear that they provided the initiative and much of the leadership for a student strike against war and fascism which involved more than 150,000 undergraduates. It would be erroneous to assume that all, or even a majority, of the strikers supported the full tenets of the left wing; on the other hand, they were resorting to a gesture symbolic of awareness, dissatisfaction and militance without precedent in our colleges. Should the new American Student Union be finally established, it will undoubtedly attract large numbers who have heretofore remained aloof. Its program will be sufficiently broad to include those unwilling to renounce all faith in the existing order but prepared to combat that order's most flagrant evils. The Union will be not merely a vehicle for the coming together of Socialists and Communists; granting the need for a common front on palpably acute issues, it will endeavor to consolidate latent sentiment into concerted endeavor. Such a move seems utterly sensible; when war and reaction are the order of the day, those dedicated to averting them are coming to realize that questions of ultimate social reorganization must not remain barriers. And the temper of a large number of undergraduates is rapidly being attuned to precisely such an agency. Its possibilities are infinite; its effects will be felt in far more general spheres.

Standing almost exactly in the center of undergraduate controversy is the National Student Federation. President MacCracken of Vassar calls it a medium for "collective bargaining" between students and administrators; radicals charge that it is a "company union" designed to offset more vigorous activity. This dispute is mirrored within the Federation, where a battle for control is quietly being waged. The N.S.F.A. is not a "mass organization"; it is composed of members of student councils throughout the country and no attempt to recruit organized numbers is being made. At the same time, the Federation, largely because of the local prestige of its members, does exert marked influence in many territories.

According to the preamble, the organization aims to "achieve a spirit of coöperation among the students of the United States, to give consideration to questions affecting student interest . . . foster understanding among the students of the world in the furtherance of an enduring peace . . . create a program for the youth of America and then act upon it." There is no systematic approach contained in this program; it was not until fairly recently, as a matter of fact, that the Federation became involved in the more turbulent phases of campus and external hostilities and no comprehensive declaration of principle has yet been framed. Thus, although its national convention criticized certain more grievous inadequacies of the New Deal and urged the passage of welfare legislation, it sidestepped specific violations of academic freedom, acceding to the "do-nothing" demand of the right wing. A year before, the convention had even refused to endorse an independent college press, setting forth instead a plea for faculty "coöperation." On the other hand, largely through the efforts of Joseph Cadden, the N.S.F.A. vigorously opposed the Nunan loyalty oath last winter; shortly afterwards a regional conference endorsed the student anti-war strike.

These are fragments of the Federation's activity; they indicate the conflict among members who are bound together only by the fact that they happen to hold student offices. The conservatives displayed pronounced strength in the December elections; there are others, however, who will probably be eager to act in coöperation on specific fronts with the new Student Union. The N.S.F.A. will eventually be compelled to formulate some basic program of interpretation and action. The present controversy, reflecting the new atmosphere of the whole student scene, will have to be resolved. Thus, the group's next steps will be important as a barometer of thinking and as a strong impetus to the forces of either the left or the right. Both are determined that its present hesitancy end.

Moving toward the right, we encounter such units as the Intercollegiate Organizations of America. Its entry was announced early this year accompanied by a sympathetic uproar in the Hearst press. At that time it claimed a membership of 250,000; nothing has been done to substantiate that boast or indicate even a tenth of so impressive an enrolment. Alarmed that "students in our universities are becoming amenable to harmful propaganda," the body pledges to "keep college youth from turning radical," to "make the college youth take the leadership and they in turn to act as the guide for the youth of other countries." The program does not state precisely what is to be accomplished (or the method of achievement), beyond a general rejuvenation of the world. Professing no interest in alliance with workers, the I.O.A. dedicates itself to constructive work—but when a representative of the Civil Liberties Union sought to ascertain the nature of this work, a spokesman could not enlighten him; he was told that the organization expects to "contact key men." At its weekly meetings, the investigator was told, a scrupulous effort is made to see that "no radicals get to talk to our members." The closest approach to a definite objective occurs in point five of the program, which admits the necessity "to organize men and women for progressive political leadership and action." Shortly afterwards the document salutes the "fundamental law of the land, the Constitution."

The most expressive and recurrent right-wing agency on the campus still possesses no central body. I refer to the Vigilantes, the term most frequently associated with these local bands of "patriots." They emerged first last fall at the University of California in Los Angeles shortly after five students had been suspended for "radicalism." The Vigilantes vowed to continue the

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"purge," to use force "if necessary" and to uphold the fortress of "Americanism." Force was apparently necessary and several first-rate riots resulted without any administrative intervention. Throughout the ensuing months, and particularly in the weeks immediately preceding and after the anti-war strike, the pattern of vigilantism was extended to other campuses. "Patriots" rose at Connecticut State to silence students who were protesting a gag-rule; at Michigan State, to prevent the holding of an anti-war demonstration; at Wisconsin, to disperse a meeting of the League for Industrial Democracy; at M.I.T., where left-wing leaders were beaten and their heads shaved because they persisted in plans for a peace strike; at San José Teachers' College, for the same reason and with administrative advice to "take the Reds out to the end of the campus and drop them off."

It is true that, thus far, the Vigilantes are isolated, local groups. They are, however, almost uniformly drawn from three main sources—Fraternity Row, the athletic squads and the R.O.T.C.; their credo is invariably limited and specific—"to wipe out the Reds," although they often fail to distinguish the exact hue of their foes; their technique is always the same—violence, with varying degrees of sadism and originality. It is probably no exaggeration to say that their behavior parallels that of the discontented, restless German young men who first rallied to Hitlerism—but I am certain that few of the Vigilantes are aware of the comparison. They just don't like the "Reds" and the purge is a holy war; their educators are peculiarly reluctant to enlighten them. It seems entirely likely that a fascist organizer, speaking in terms of "Americanism" and the other sanctities, will be able to go far among these sporadic terror-bands. The Vigilantes have done pretty well by themselves without benefit of a central office, a program or a sustaining fund. That will come later.

Those are the spontaneous right-wing blocs; more calculated and deliberate are such ventures as the Americanism Committee of the American Legion, which is designed to "uproot radicalism" in the schools; recently there was announced the formation of the California Americans, an offshoot of the earlier Vigilantes but now aiming for larger and more unified effort.

Finally there are such entities as the Paul Reveres, the Crusaders, the Minute Men and other avowedly reactionary groups. They usually want "American institutions preserved," Stalinists like Roosevelt deported and, in many cases, Jews sent back where they came from. Neither these nor the open Nazi "cells" have made any conspicuous advance; there seems valid reason to predict that more "indigenous" agencies will have to do the job. It is noteworthy, however, that every outbreak of vigilantism has been accomplished by anti-Semitic fever, a sharp reminder to those who believe it "couldn't happen here."

Perhaps the most significant fact about the university scene is the large number of students who are on the verge of pledging their allegiance to one of these movements. I have cited the dominant streams into which they are beginning to head; but the critical majority is in the process of decision and it is this uncertainty as to their choice that renders the conflict far more than a sham battle. Most students, unlike the rebels of fifteen years ago, realize that they alone won't "save the world"; but they can be of more than passing importance. Students helped immeasurably to break the British general strike of 1926. Even more crucial issues may be partially resolved in the clash between an amalgamated leftward movement and an organized Vigilante uprising. The rah-rah boy, we are frequently told, is disappearing; but whether he will grow up into a full-fledged insurgent with his eye on a better world or whether he will line up with the Hearstlings to make the country safe for the better people is the real issue underlying the present ferment. It becomes increasingly evident that he will not—even if he could—remain an impartial witness. And the awakening is due in remarkably small measure to our educators; they are beginning to long for the more frivolous days.

JAMES WECHSLER.

When the Insects Came

WHEN THE insects came, all the important people who might have done something about it were away for the summer.

Nobody had paid much attention to the scientists. Year after year the learned men would gather in solemn conclave and issue their press reports of impending doom. A few city editors with foresight had enough faith in the savants to feature these prognostications of annihilation by the insects. Others used just a few inches of the handouts on an inside page.

As a matter of fact, the columnists were in a large measure responsible for the country's indifferent attitude about the matter. Heywood Broun attempted to enliven the summer doldrums by coming out flatly in favor of insects, decrying the national prejudice against them. F. P. A. printed a rather deft and humorous quatrain entitled "Insect, Stay 'Way from My Door!" Winchell, strangely enough, remained aloof and refused to comment, while Brisbane's half-hearted paragraphs indicated that he was still holding out for the simian family to inherit the world of man.

Quick to catch their cues, stage and radio comedians took up the cry. For a time jokes about insects threatened to force the Mae West quips into oblivion. Risqué stories involving insects spread from club to club and from smoking-car to smoking-car. Penner, Cantor and Jack Benny all put on skits about them and Earl Carroll had his girls go through a modernistic, pseudo-artistic dance impres-

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sion of the lower forms of animal life. Paramount stopped production on two pictures to start shooting a love story with a scientific background. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer put seven writers to work on a script calling for a smash scene showing man fighting the insects.

Insect games were put out for the kiddies, and advertisers of cigarettes, beer and cereals informed a gullible public that no harm could come to those who used their brands. Some of the more alert intellectuals began to get worried and a book entitled "Insect Life and How to Beat It" enjoyed a slight sales flurry. Even Thomas Cook and Sons took advantage of all the talk, recommending a cruise to Bali or Bermuda as a pleasant way to spend one's last days.

Just to be on the safe side in case anything did happen, the Associated Press dug up its list of opinion molders. Clarence Darrow, H. L. Mencken, Nicholas Murray Butler and Upton Sinclair were asked what they thought of the situation. All indicated that if there was anything they could do to speed the insects on their mission, they would be only too glad to help.

In this way did the republic spend its last days, like an indifferent prisoner who goes to the electric chair shortly after midnight jauntily smoking a cigarette. Harried and worn by a prolonged depression, the people could not rouse themselves to a state of righteous indignation over the affair. So the summer slid by and the populace amused itself as best it could on the pabulum which the scare produced and reflected on the stage, the screen, the radio and in the newspapers.

Late in August The New York Times's science editor devoted an entire page on Sunday to the growing menace. The next day's papers carried stories of Florida residents being attacked by insect hordes. The National Guard was called out. Before relief could be sent, neighboring states were invaded. The country began to grow alarmed.

Surrounded by a score of secret-service men carrying Flit sprays, and swathed in heavy netting, the President was rushed back to Washington from his summer camp. But even the President was a trifle perplexed when he arrived. Caught off his guard, there seemed to be little he could do. The President realized how futile it would be to get Congress together. As Commander-in-chief of the army and navy he decided to issue orders telling all enlisted men to stand by, ready for orders and for action at a moment's notice. Just what that action would be neither the President nor anybody else knew, but election was the following year and he had to show the people that there were clear minds in Washington that knew how to cope with any emergency.

The big men of the country remained adamant and were loath to cut short their vacations even in view of man's forthcoming demise. The Morgans, du Ponts and others expressed regret at not being able to help national leaders, by sending mildly philosophical telegrams to the effect that perhaps everything was happening for the best. The Republicans saw the time as advantageous for pointing out Democratic inefficiency. Herbert Hoover, Republican Committeemen said, was just the man needed to meet such a predicament.

In the meantime people who had never picked up a pen before began writing letters-to-the-editor. All advised the government to "Do something." No more feasible suggestion than this was offered. Only William Randolph Hearst kept his head through the hectic hours preceding the debacle. He had his men print editorials in bold-face type on the front page of every Hearst paper demanding a bigger navy and blaming present conditions on Japan and Russia.

Slowly but steadily reports giving definite proof that the onslaught of the insects was whittling down the country's population began to drift into the larger cities. After the third day such newspapers as still existed ceased to print their obituary columns. Everybody began to realize that there was really nothing to be done. Time seemed to stand still and the nation waited.

At the end of the sixth day all visible traces of a once powerful civilization had gone. The last human being to witness the scene was a gentleman working for a gas and electric company in Lititz, Pennsylvania. As part of an underground crew, he had wandered away from the other workers and lost his bearings amidst the labyrinth of pipes beneath the street surface. Weak, and almost mad from hunger, he at length found his way to the street level. In the few brief seconds which were his to view the downfall of a once powerful civilization, he said, "For the lova Mike!"

HERBERT L. SCHÖN.

Lost Country

Wherever it was, it was not a city.
It was a shore of granite, perhaps, a place where waves
Assailed the cliffs and gave them angular beauty,
The casual, hard grace that sea gulls have.

There was a forest near it, of hemlock or birch,
And a permanent iron-blue sky was hung above it.
I wandered there, and I slept beneath an arch
Of amber leaves; and I swore I would never leave it.

There was a smell of water and dead brush at night,
A fragrance rank with decay or sweet with moss.
Birds darted among the rocks as swift as thought,
And the serpent that clasped a log was sheer as ice.

It was a place far from here; it was not a city.
It was a shore of granite, and I know the waves
Assailed the cliffs and gave them angular beauty.
These are the only memories I have.

LIONEL WIGGAM.

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Washington Notes

F.D.R.: Coolidge's Avatar—The Dangers of Responsibility Without Power—No Mourners at the Housing Program's Funeral

MR. ROOSEVELT showed himself in a cheery mood on his trip across the continent. He was delighted with the condition of the nation and certain that we had come "through stormy seas into fair weather." This marks a relatively sudden change in Mr. Roosevelt. Last May and June, he was of the opinion that concentrated wealth was destroying the small investor, the small merchant and the industrial worker. At the time, however, he was engaged in a death struggle with the nation's bankers over the Federal Reserve bill, with the utility executives over the holding-company bill, and with men of wealth over the tax bill. Now he wants a reconciliation with business.

The most extravagant evidence of his new attitude, however, is contained in his Summation of the Budget, given out at the White House while he was traveling westward. A large part of it read comically like a Wall Street market letter. All it lacked was a final line: "We advise the immediate accumulation of sound industrials." Major L. L. B. Angas, the British stock-market soothsayer, recently predicted that Mr. Roosevelt would eventually "out-Coolidge Coolidge." Doubtless he was astonished at the swiftness with which his prophecy apparently began to be fulfilled.

In my judgment, however, these sharp turns in Mr. Roosevelt's policy ought to not be too harshly condemned. The prickliness of the fundamental situation in which the President finds himself is not often appreciated. Since it explains a large part of his conduct, it is worth restating. The depression did not come from war, pestilence or famine, but from the failure of the business system to distribute goods. Upon taking office, Mr. Roosevelt conspicuously refrained from demanding authority over business by which he could compel it to function in a tolerable fashion. What he did do, however, was to volunteer to make good its deficiencies by federal credit. Wherever business failed to distribute food, clothing or shelter, he pledged himself to furnish government relief. He accepted responsibility without power, and events have proved it a mad, quixotic act.

At the very beginning of his administration, it might have been politically possible for him to have taken over the railroads. Investors were greatly disheartened and many of them would have welcomed an opportunity to unload their holdings upon the government. Had Mr. Roosevelt bought the railroads, employment in the railroad industry itself, and the important equipment industry, would have been within his control. Before offering to underwrite the whole economic system, Mr. Roosevelt should have demanded, if not ownership of, at least a wide degree of supervision over, the half-dozen major industries. Enfeebled and frightened as business men were in 1933, it is quite probable that they would have refused this demand. In which case, in all prudence, Mr. Roosevelt should have declined to give business a blanket commitment on relief.

Consider the perils that Mr. Roosevelt has drawn around his head. For all that he can do to prevent it, industry may continue indefinitely its present policy of high prices and restricted production, which will mean the indefinite continuance of unemployment. Mr. Roosevelt, however, cannot keep on distributing relief indefinitely. Doubtless it is true that this country would be able to support a national debt of sixty billions, instead of the thirty billions we now have. But long before the theoretical upper limit was reached, there would be a crisis of confidence. Next January, it is virtually certain that the bonus will be voted, either with Mr. Roosevelt's consent or over his veto. If it is to be paid in a lump sum, as the veterans demand, the Treasury will have to raise at once $2,000,000,000. If, at about the same time, the President announces that the government must find another $4,000,000,000 for relief in 1936, there will almost surely be a loud outcry from bankers and investors. If it suffices merely to alarm business leaders, and to cause them to delay their plans for replacements and improvements, there will be a stock-market slump, and Mr. Roosevelt's personal political fortunes will be endangered.

Throughout the coming presidential campaign, Mr. Roosevelt will be found vainly seeking a way out of the mousetrap he innocently entered in March, 1933. It is the cause of all his sudden shiftings from right to left. It would be political suicide for him to retrace his steps, cut off federal relief and face the resulting nationwide strikes and rioting with troops as Cleveland did the Populist uprising of the 1893 depression.

It is equally inconceivable that he can now institute national planning for the basic industries. At intervals, the sudden hope appears to rise within him that business will miraculously come to his rescue, and, as he wistfully said last week in his Boulder Dam speech, will realize that it "must bear the principal responsibility of keeping the processes of greater employment moving with accelerated speed." When business proves to be stone-deaf, as it always does, he sheers off again towards the left.

It is disheartening to find that almost no popular protest was aroused by the President's sweeping curtailment of the low-cost-housing activities of the Resettlement Administration. The original plans called for the construction of twenty communities on the outskirts of as many large cities. The President's decision, before he left on his Western trip, to reserve nearly all of the remainder of the $4,000,000,000 for the W.P.A. apparently means that the Resettlement Administration will build only five surburban communities. The Resettlement Administration had become the chief hope of low-cost-housing advocates in the administration, and it had gathered an extraordinarily imaginative and resourceful staff. The casual wiping out of two-thirds of its projects is a genuine disaster.

The administration is now under great pressure from the savings banks to abolish the postal-savings system. Their spokesmen argue that it has become unnecessary because small savings accounts are now generally guaranteed by federal deposit insurance. The chief cause of the agitation, however, is that the interest rate of savings banks in New York has fallen until it is on a level with that of the postal-savings system. Farley has spiritedly defended the system, and it seems likely the bankers' protests will fail.

Washington. T. R. B.

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Other People's Money

The Public Plays Mother Goose to Two Little Pigs—Pulling Railroads Out of a Hat —Does Anybody Care?

THE LITTLE comedy that was enacted last week in which the Big Bad Wolf crashed into the cabin of the Two Little Pigs (Oris and Manton) and grabbed all their railroad toys and sold them at auction, ending with a pleasant little scene in which the Two Little Pigs, after their great disaster, stood around with their toys in their hands receiving the congratulations of the Big Bad Wolf and all his friends, has left even Wall Street scratching its head over the meaning of the show.

On the surface, just what happened may be briefly described as follows. Some years ago the Van Sweringens went into the railroad business. It would not be fair to say they started with a shoestring. They didn't even invest that much. They bought the Nickel Plate for $2,000,000 down and $650,000 a year for ten years. Here's the way they did it. (1) They made a contract to buy the road. (2) They borrowed $2,000,000 from Cleveland banks and put up the contract as collateral. (3) They organized a holding company and issued $2,075,000 of preferred stock and $12,500,000 of common. They sold $1,575,000 of preferred and subscribed to $500,000 of it themselves. With this they paid off the bank loan of $2,000,000 and had $75,000 for expenses. This makes it appear that they put up $500,000. But they didn't. Even this they borrowed from a bank using their newly issued stock as collateral. And in addition to $500,000 of preferred stock, they got without further payment $10,500,000 of common.

This was the beginning. Their investment was —0. This is what they stood to lose in money. Before they were through they had obtained control of the Nickel Plate, the Chesapeake and Ohio, the Marquette, the Erie, the Missouri Pacific and a large collection of smaller roads. The controlling interest in these roads was lodged in a holding company—the Alleghany Corporation, organized in 1929. This corporation issued a lot of stock, which was sold through the Morgan firm to the public. The Van Sweringens turned all their railroad and other stocks over to the Alleghany and took in payment 2,250,000 shares and $36,000,000 in cash. Later they sold 672,810 of the shares at a profit of $23,000,000.

These shares, by which they controlled the Alleghany, they lodged in the Vaness Corporation—one of their personal holding companies. In 1930 they wanted more money. They went to the Morgans and borrowed $39,500,000. The Morgans loaned part of this to the Vaness Company and part to the Cleveland Terminal Shares Corporation. Later this was increased to $41,000,000. As security for this loan the Vans put up a batch of stocks and bonds, including 2,134,492 shares of Alleghany common, which carried control of all these great railroads.

On this Morgan loan the Van Sweringens defaulted several years ago. The Morgans agreed to let it ride, adding the interest each year. When the sale was made the whole amount due was somewhere around $51,000,000.

Now see their predicament. The Morgans could have taken those Alleghany shares along with the rest of the collateral for their loan and thus obtained complete control. For some reason they chose not to do this. Instead, they arranged a private and amicable sale of all the securities at public auction. I estimated that the market value of all this was about $7,734,000. It sold at auction for $7,403,000. The Van Sweringens bought the Alleghany stock for $3,120,000.

What has happened to them? What have they lost? They got from under the dead weight of that $51,000,000 debt, which, so far as encumbering them goes, is wiped out. Control has passed from the literally insolvent Vaness Corporation to a new holding company called the Mid-America, which is free of the Vaness debt. The Vans control this as they did the Vaness. Thus they are quit of that great debt and they have their railroad empire still in their hands to play with. By clever management and manipulation they can get back out of the public perhaps part of the fictitious and transient millions they lost.

But what has happened to the people who bought their Alleghany Corporation stocks—the ones they sold to the public? The dear, trusting public bought 1,250,000 of these shares at from $20 to $56. It bought 672,000 at $48. They are now worth $1.50. That's gone. The Vans have wiped out their personal indebtedness for about 15 cents on the dollar. They have done this by borrowing the 15 cents as they did that first $500,000, from somewhere. It is a beautiful success story in which these two newsboys from the sidewalks of Cleveland are making a fresh start without even a shoestring. The boys begin without shoestrings and their investors end without shirts.

Some future investigation may reveal the identity of the man or men who put up this $3,120,000 for them. But what is more important now is the hungry eyes the boys are focusing on that rich treasure chest of Uncle Sam that the R.F.C. guards. This railroad empire of theirs is a pretty ramshackle thing. One important part of it is in bankruptcy—the Missouri Pacific. Another important part of it—their first toy, the Nickel Plate—defaulted on a $14,946,000 bond issue the day after the auction. Much of what is left would be in bankruptcy were it not for a kindly government which, through the R.F.C., has been dishing out millions to the Van Sweringen roads to save the stock holdings of these white-haired boys. To date they have gotten for the

Erie R.R.	$16,582,000
Pere Marquette	3,000,000
Nickel Plate	18,200,000
Missouri Pacific	23,134,800

And now another road is ready for the ash-can. And they have been maturing all sorts of pretty schemes to have dear, kindly old Jesse Jones put up some more millions for them out of Uncle Sam's R.F.C. Will he do it? And can they get away with it? Particularly since there is now pending a suit by that same R.F.C. against them to make them disgorge quite a few millions which the R.F.C. alleges they made out of the Missouri Pacific by selling it a bunch of junk at a high price.

But what of the poor bankers who have lost so much money? Their actual out-of-pocket loss is $41,000,000, less the $7,403,000 realized at the sale, or roughly $33,600,000.

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But are they out of the railroad mess? There seems to be little doubt that the Morgan firm at least has no part of the control the Vans bought for their $3,120,000. But is this railroad empire wholly out of their reach? The Alleghany Corporation has outstanding three bond issues. In each the Guaranty Trust Company is named as trustee. There has been no default of interest on these issues. But large blocks of securities owned by the Alleghany, which account for control of at least three major railroad systems and many small ones, were put up as collateral to support these bond issues. They are in the possession of the trustee. Under the indenture it is provided that if at any time the value of these underlying securities falls below 150 percent of the amount of the loans, the trustee may impound the securities and vote them at stockholders' meetings. Under this provision the trustee has impounded these securities. Thus it can vote 1,248,000 shares of Chesapeake and Ohio stock out of 1,799,245, and 497,700 shares of Missouri Pacific stock out of 828,395. In a stockholders' vote, therefore, the Guaranty Trust, closely allied with the Morgans, can oust the Vans from the Chesapeake and Ohio or the Missouri Pacific at any time. What are their plans? What is behind this whole mysterious business? There is a committee in Washington authorized to dig into these railroad reorganizations. Perhaps it will grow curious about this amazing last chapter in the Vans' story. Perhaps we may yet learn all about it. Meantime, how long are these promoters to abuse our patience? JOHN T. FLYNN.

Shakespeare in Hollywood

OPENING at an $11 top, running well over two hours, costing more than a million and (to ensure getting this back) press-agented for months ahead as the greatest marriage that was ever married between (among) William Shakespeare, Max Reinhardt, William ("Fog Over Frisco") Dieterle, Felix Mendelssohn, Bronislava Nijinska, James Cagney and a good sprinkling of Warners' best California baked hams—being all this, the film "A Midsummer Night's Dream" demands a certain attention that will never be justified in terms of pure entertainment. At its many screenings there will be no lack of Ah's and Oh's, culture clubs will have discussions, newspaper critics will put on their Sunday adjectives; but the picture is fairly tedious, being twice the average running time, and there is going to be a powerful minority of American husbands who will get one load of the elves and pixies, and feel betrayed away from their stocking feet and sports page, and say as much, violently.

Apart from such unconscious and partly philistine criticism, there is to be said about this version of the Shakespeare extravaganza that it is topheavy with the weight of its art departments. (You can just see the camera and property and boom men standing around and scratching themselves, balancing the impulse to guffaw against the uneasy wonder whether there may be something deep in these here Nijinska, what do you call them, esthetic dances.) Its worst contradiction, in fact, lies in the way Warners first ordered up a whole batch of foreign and high-sounding names to handle music, dances, general production—and then turned around and handed them such empty vessels as Dick Powell, Jean Muir, Victor Jory, for actors. A second major contradiction appears in the way the whole thing is approached. For a while the producers will stand outside Shakespeare, handling each line literally, with marvelment and awe. Then suddenly they will either forget the book altogether and go Hollywood, or else get inside it, improvising on it as familiarly (and justifiably) as they would with any mortal working script.

Where they have arranged to forget the original is principally in the supernatural doings of the midsummer night, where there are fairies singly and in Music Hall troops, Titania, Oberon and Puck (Mickey Rooney, too ill instructed and raucous to be given such prominence). Here situations are elaborated for all they are worth, regardless of the main play, like so many independent sideshows on a midway. Oberon's ensemble departure, for example, must take up all of ten minutes, and yet right in the middle of it is inserted, for no earthly reason, the detailed seduction of a white nymph by a black sprite, she finally on his shoulder and disappearing down a black distance, weaving away at a fire symbol with her hands, wrists and forearms—in short, a dancer with a specialty in a long vanish shot. The necessity for some such figuration in a play of this type is obvious; but there is also a need for distinguishing between fantasy and "Flying Down to Rio."

The idea of the goblin orchestra—grotesque little figures in masks—is by way of contrast a touch of what is needed. Introduced only occasionally, this effect is fresh, pleasing; it represents the imagination at work and is worth all the brute mechanics, however elaborate, of settings, costumes, parades and spangled gauze shots.

But where the film really goes along with Shakespeare is in all that play-within-a-play business of hempen homespuns, the weavers, tinkers, cobblers of the city. Here the lines are surrounded with enough business to give them a bright and plausible reality. As Bottom, Cagney is out of character but still able to give it something; and his associates in earnest buffoonery—Joe E. Brown, Hugh Herbert, etc.—are the best cast figures in the production. With their various interpolations and properties, they are made into something that can be laughed at because it is real and funny, rather than a classic thing to laugh at.

The principal difficulty is that the stage of Shakesperean comedy is not the stage today, that this business of groaning, sighing, jiggling couplets, spouting passion and still mistaking your grandmother for the girl friend for three acts straight—this tradition in humor is a diaper that we have put away for good. The humor that really comes out in Hollywood's "Midsummer Night's Dream" is based, like the best of Shakespeare, on people; the formal comedy element is false to us and must be toned down with more subtlety than the producers of this film can muster. They could have done it far better by taking the whole less solemnly, by using people who (like Olivia de Haviland) might read the lines with some comprehension of what they were about. But they would have done still better by taking another play than this particular play, the product of a poet's exuberance and youth. Its phrases still ring like bells, there is an easy strong vigor and charmed air to the whole. But owing to circumstances and the matter of a few centuries in time, its words are beautiful as words in a book, not in the mouths of fools. OTIS FERGUSON.

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CORRESPONDENCE

An American Artists' Congress

SIR: A Congress of American Artists is to be held in December to discuss the cultural and economic problems of the artist today and the threat of war and fascism. The enthusiastic response to the "call" by more than one hundred well known artists from every part of the country gives testimony to the fact that this congress, which will form the basis for a permanent organization of American artists, is extremely urgent.

Interested persons please communicate with Stuart Davis, Secretary, at 43 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Gaylordsville, Conn. PETER BLUME.

A Reply to Conrad Aiken

SIR: Conrad Aiken, who says that histories of literature written from an entirely proletarian point of view are just as limited and meaningless and absurd as if they were written from a royalist point of view, or a Roman Catholic, seems to think it is all right to produce critical commentary written entirely from a liberal-bourgeois point of view, especially if the critic himself is ignorant of its class nature ["A Plea for Anonymity," The New Republic, September 18]. Malcolm Cowley has properly picked him up on three important items; but there is still more to be said in exposure of Aiken's own class point of view, and by way of proof that his own unconscious ways of thinking demonstrate his ineluctable allegiance to a social class, and in reality refute his own argument that the artist should stand clear, approach universals, and find in privacy freedom for the greatest work.

Bourgeois critics of esthetics, like those of economics, fall into the error of deriving universal laws from their observation of phenomena which inevitably occur within their peculiar economy; hence, they conclude, these phenomena are invariable laws of nature—"universals." Aiken, for instance, says that "the good artist must now as always turn his back on any attempt to hoodwink him into being merely a tool for party or sect." This statement certainly packs in assumptions. In the first place, it implies, falsely, that all societies are always sectarian; in the second place, it suggests that the artist has to be hoodwinked into serving party or sect, and never cares to do so voluntarily; third, by the use of the adverb "merely," it confuses its own argument by implying that there *is* a useful service to party and sect that the artist can properly perform; fourth, it does not anticipate the argument it raises in the metaphor "tool," for tools, whether wielded merely by party or sect, can still be usefully or wantonly wielded, and that makes all the difference. Aiken's metaphor of the artist's turning his back likewise involves his protagonist in an unfortunate dilemma, for he is committed either to a position of perpetual rotation, or of being automatically hoodwinked, as soon as he turns his back, by the opposition party or sect. Furthermore, unless the artist is wise to the devious ways of party and sect, how is he going to recognize, let alone turn his back on, attempts to hoodwink him? But this presumes exactly what Aiken denies—the necessity of political experience as a framework of reference. And Aiken's criticism illustrates the confusion into which he is bound to be precipitated by not knowing where he stands; the rhetorical confusion would not exist if confusion of thought were not its basis. . . .

If this discussion appears to distort the emphasis of Aiken's article, it is because his major implications are not those to which he devotes the most space. Like most liberal reformers, he spends his main time and energy attacking symptoms, in particular "the whole literary and journalistic and publicity racket." Of this he presents a detailed and justified indictment, but beyond that he cannot go. "No doubt it is idle, and perhaps it is too late, to protest about this, nor in a situation so complex and already so highly developed is it easy to suggest remedies." What Aiken does not realize is that the racket is a necessary cultural phenomenon in the later phases of capitalist crisis, that it is all tied up with the furious struggle for the market, and that the bourgeois is incapable of looking upon literature purely as art, but must also regard it as a commodity and article of exploit. This led him, at one time, to produce a form peculiarly suited for his purpose—the novel, which Flaubert said was more often written by disguised bourgeois than by artists. It has also led him, now that sales are more important than production, to the establishment of trade journals masking as literary reviews, of the cozy business offices inhabited by the Benets, the Van Dorens and others of that ilk, and of all the apparatus of ballyhoo. This apparatus will wither away when the system that evolved it is liquidated; but this is a remedy that Aiken no doubt would consider worse than the disease.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES.

New York City.

Wait and See

SIR: Malcolm Cowley was too interested in the "general theme" of "Men of Good Will" to mention some of the high points in the last volume—such as the presentation of the provincial cattle dealer—and one might forgive him if he had got that theme right. But the "coming of the World War and the futility of the efforts to prevent it" seems to me only about one-quarter of a true statement. The book is a vast portrayal of pre-war France with a pronounced interest in social questions. Let's not say anything more than that for the present as far as the "theme" goes. And if this is granted there isn't much force left in Cowley's criticism of Romains for leaving out the Russian loans, the munition makers, etc. What's more, I'll eat my hat if Romains thinks or intends us to think Laulerque's secret society was the right way to prevent war. It seemed pretty clear to me that the incident was to show once more how hard it is for an earnest man to know where to put his shoulder to the wheel, and how easy it is to get on the wrong track.—But let's wait and see.

GEORGE E. DILLER.

New Brunswick, N. J.

Extracts from Letters

SARAH MORRIS of San Francisco writes that contrary to the impression given in a recent issue of The New Republic the Suez Canal is not an English highway. The Canal was built by Ferdinand de Lesseps, in spite of constant objections made by the British, between 1854 and 1869, not a cent of the money put up for its construction was British, and it is now controlled by a preëminently French concern, the Suez Canal Company. "There are twenty-one French directors to the ten British, and although the British tried to gain possession of the Canal in 1875, by illegally and secretly buying the stocks of the financially embarrassed Khedive of Egypt, they control only 44 percent of the stock, while the remaining 56 percent is French owned or controlled. Further proof that it is a French concern is that the French government and not the British taxes the Suez Canal Company."

John Robert Riley, secretary of the Midwest Section of the New Theatre League, writes that the directors of the Goodman Theatre, connected with the Art Institute in Chicago, refused to let the playhouse for the production of Clifford Odets' play "Till the Day I Die." "Every person who believes in the free access of the stage to the only kind of theatre that has a real social function in American life should record his protest with the Board of Trustees, Art Institute, Michigan Avenue and Adams Street, Chicago, Illinois. Midwestern theatre groups can join in the fight against censorship by participating in the annual Midwest Conference of the New Theatre League on October 13, at which the problem of censorship of the theatre will be thoroughly discussed."

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Wayward Glamor

The Taming of the Shrew. Scheme of production devised by Mr. Lunt and Miss Fontanne. The Guild Theatre, September 30, 1935.

Winterset, by Maxwell Anderson. Martin Beck Theatre, September 25, 1935.

THERE is one thing that various reviewers and spectators are sure to say about "The Taming of the Shrew" at the Guild Theatre. They will say, meaning to praise it, that this presentation of Shakespeare's play is not bothered by any reverence or tradition, in sum that the Lunts are taking the bard easy. Nothing could be worse tosh. There are two kinds of irreverence to Shakespeare: one is to think him dull and all outdated; one is to believe, or profess, that regardless of centuries and despite human weakness, in dramatist and audience, every word in him is immortal. With the Lunts it is the very opposite of irreverence. They believe in the delight inherent in the piece they undertake for us, in the deep power of joyous humor; and they know that nothing is less Shakespeare than a good deal of the Shakespearean tradition. The famous Daly-Rehan form of "The Taming of the Shrew," for example, was only a patch-up of the Garrick version, whole scenes added, and divers bits, no doubt.

When they were devising the present production, the Lunts saw, of course, its limitations, partly due to epochs so separate as the English Renaissance and America today, partly due to the differences in humor, the woman question, the stage possibilities, et cetera; and partly to Shakespeare himself's having thrown the piece off for what it was worth, as apt to the occasion and hilarity. He struck the note of his show when he opened it with hunting gentlemen and their dogs, Silver, Clowder, Echo, Belman, along with Christopher Sly, et cetera, et cetera. In a manner of speaking, everything is left to lump it in "The Taming of the Shrew"; and this the Lunts knew also. They were quite right to invest that play within the play with a contrasting palatial elegance and rich riot. Such was the Renaissance and nobody could know that better than Shakespeare. Such was England, bawdy, magnificent, dirt and brocades, as the Venetian ambassador wrote back to the Council.

The Katherine and Petruchio are brilliant performances, in roles where the difficulties spread out beyond our time almost. You can see that Miss Fontanne and Mr. Lunt recognize perfectly the play's earlier simplification of the problem of men and women's combat. The sly overtones that these two modern players give to the whole version of this sex struggle, Shakespeare, if he came into the stalls at the Guild, would himself appropriate, for he was ever ambitious of the centuries and greedy for all time. He would admire the fresh application of his matter. Anybody who thinks that Miss Fontanne means, as she recites it, Katherine's last speech to settle the question for good is much mistaken. She merely lets it serve to outline the battle launched, but at the same time, neatly indicates that modes in warfare may change without war's ending. A player's comment must be seen in his playing—if we are to have art—and for an actress nowadays to seem to take Katherine's last speech in perfect seriousness would mean only nonsense or some forced quaintness in the scene. Miss Fontanne is further defended by the bounce and eloquence of the lines themselves, not to speak of what Katherine is doing to the other two ladies. We remain by no means convinced that the speaker is depressed or very much broken.

I have never seen Mr. Lunt or Miss Fontanne better in stage movement, or in bold, assured stage make-up that renders them almost masks. In the theatre, the style of acting never leads but follows the play and the idea behind its production. Thus the first problem in this production of "The Taming of the Shrew" is to get all the present company's performance into one key. The baroque intention of the whole production needs to pass into and throughout all the playing, the players need time to strive for that. The key has been excellently devised. It appears in Mr. Claggett Wilson's costumes, which are beautifully Italian Renaissance and are dramatic to the piece; and in the scheme for and designs of the settings. It appears in the opening and closing pageantry employed. Many of the scenic pieces have great charm and stage variety. Whether some of these could be richer in tone and in scale and still not interfere with the acting is a question that might be considered. The Baptista of Mr. Sydney Greenstreet was admirable; it achieved a new drawing that brought the character into interesting lights.

The second chief need for this production is an audience. Mr. Lunt and Miss Fontanne have devised something that boldly reminds us of the fact that a good portion of the theatre art is the audience. Riding in, for example, on those fantastic artificial horses, one of them handsome, one grotesque, or tripping through passages of rowdy poetry, and all that whirling confidence and gusto so plainly meant to be shared with the audience—what could that not become with spectators awake to circus and bravura in the theatre?

This brevity of comment by no means indicates a lack of appreciation of Mr. Maxwell Anderson's new play. "Winterset" contributes, often splendidly, one of the most needed elements in our present American drama: it combines metrical writing with matter that ordinarily is seen as prose. Indeed, the rich, high flight of verse and bright words serve here the purposes of a kind of gangster drama. In the first and last acts, the direction of statement is less secure, and the verse sometimes less organic to the sense and to the dramatic life of the moment. But no theatre experiment this year will be more profitable than watching the second act, with the mingling of melodrama, passion, crime play, lyricism, type characters and so on. Indisputably this scene is lifted, through the tension of poetic images, the contrast and wings of words; it holds you, and it stirs all its matter into the region of complex and significant excitement.

There were more than a usual number of good performances. Mr. Richard Bennett, as the crazed judge, with that trial of long ago burning through his mind, gave a lucent, beautiful portrayal, seemingly effortless, and long to be remembered. Mr. Burgess Meredith was taut and dramatic, touching and always right. The setting, of the great arch of the bridge overhead, was, in my opinion, not only the high mark in Mr. Jo Mielziner's career, but one of the memorable settings of the decade.

STARK YOUNG.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Hell Could Freeze Over

RAMON SENDER was in Morocco when the tribes rose under Abd el Krim in 1921, and made their terrible clean sweep of the Spanish forces in the interior. His book,[1] already published in eight languages, is about life on that campaign. It is more valuable, in what it has to tell us of things we could not imagine, than any five-foot shelf of Life and Death in Recent Leading Fiction. But while its author half apologizes for not being a novelist and speaks of his material as "these notes," he still tries to work it into a novel about a character, the peasant Viance of the 42nd. And as a novel it is confusing and incomplete, half this, half that.

In the notes, he says, imagination played "no part at all." They were written "with the voice of the African landscape sounding in my ears." They would have been much better as a diary, then—even as a straight military report. The facts would stand out free, clear and violent in some such form, because they would be the actual record, the photostat of great impressions; their gaps and smudges would be eloquent in themselves. Whereas once the facts have been touched up with fiction, the naturalness of sprawled events twisted to fit a pattern, the reader begins to make demands. Wants to know why he is barking his shins on loose corners. Wants to know how come, if that act can be handled from all sides, objectively, this one cannot.

What happens is that "Pro Patria" starts out as an "I" story, working up a fine picture of the uncertainties, mean rigors, privations, cynicism and dead-beat weariness of outpost camp life; and then, after no more warning than a few haphazard quotation marks (Viance starts to tell something to the author) throws back for its main action to a third-person account of Viance's part in the great retreat two years or so before. The author is now Viance and now someone who listens to his story, now Don Antonio in the guard tent and at the same minute some supervisory being, cognizant of what goes on in the other tents of the camp. Movements from place to place and from time to time are now delineated, now not; actions are partly explained as history and partly left in the obscure state of things seen for an instant of great stress and lost sight of.

And the result of this is that while there are in "Pro Patria" a thousand terrible incidents and in "Paths of Glory" only a handful, Humphrey Cobb's book is so concentrated in its direction as to rock anyone on his feet, and Sender's, which by its nature ought to sweep him off them altogether, disperses its forces and defeats its own artifice, leaving the reader horrified but still thumbing back to see what happened.

So much for the novel, as a novel. But there is still powerful material behind it. There still shows through its obscurities the picture of all those men, frying under that pitiless strange sun, straggling to battle with the flesh of their feet in rags, their water gone, so that to drink the urine after it had been cooled off, and sweetened with sugar, became an officer's privilege; their outfits gone, their reinforcements gone, hope, faith and scraps of food gone. And finally, in the teeth of that fierce wind of iron and lead, their bombs and ammunition gone.

From post to post, from Position R beyond Annual back to the sea, they were too thinly flung out to hold the attack when it came on with its frenzy and triumph; and they were too poorly officered to retreat with sense. So that mile after mile of that dry hot plain was covered deep with their corpses, and the abandoned blockhouses were festooned with them, nailed to the wood in grotesque postures, and a man could not step without slipping in the details of them and without hearing, from the ravines where they had been piled and the trenches where they had been cut down, the sound of their bloating and disintegration under the sun, a slow weird music of clarinets and timbrels.

But there was no pity or horror to be wasted on the corpses: those battalions were very well out of it, clear of this treadmill of being men and jerking the bolt of a rifle that scorched the hands, so weak that the kicking of the butt was out of control, making a bruised mass of the flesh from cheekbone to shoulder, making the gums swell and bleed. Three days without food, sleep, water; five days; a night, another day, with no way of winning or retreating or giving up or going on, yet in a strange trance of yanking a rifle bolt, stumbling around with lead in their bodies and delirium in their heads, in the army of Spain.

They were in the army and alive and so they kept on fighting from habit, but there was no illusion among them that they were fighting *for* anything. There is no illusion in this book that they were doing anything with sense in it, let alone glory, glamor, etc. If it were not for the cold level voice with which Sender adds incident after incident to the general body of undeniable evidence (incidents have a way of not sounding true when they are not), it would be impossible to imagine a group of human beings so drugged, subhuman, so cut off from hope and normal sensations. They had no faith in each other, no faith in their officers, no faith in the convictions or lack of them that had brought them here. Someone had set a brass band off under them, getting them into this trap, and they knew it. They moved each in such a deadened stupor that there was not even the resolution to make the best or the worst of it.

The one ray of hope showing to them was that they would somehow survive until they were discharged or got leave, so that they could get clear of this and get home. And when they did get home, they found that the world had been going on and that they were thoroughly out of it. Even the love of their families had got dull with time and habit, and they found themselves scarecrows in faded patched tunics, without work or any ability to concentrate on it. They had gone off in a national frenzy of drums and bugles and colors, and when they got back they found that the chief thing people had learned about the business of carrying the colors into Morocco was that those who came back from it were invariably alive with lice.

There is no false note in that scene toward the end where Viance tells the stranger that if he's got sons, he must keep them out of the army, and the stranger says what can *he* do about it, and Viance says "You can kill them!" so involuntarily that he reddens, as befits somebody who tries to speak about war to those who haven't yet had one. Even such fine indictments as this can be circulated and read without getting across any idea of that state of brutal idiocy, so that hell could freeze over and you could still recruit men by whole regiments, to go and annex it.

OTIS FERGUSON.

[1] Pro Patria, by Ramón J. Sender. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. $2.50.

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Out of His Own Mouth

War Memoirs of Robert Lansing. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 383 pages. $3.50.

THIS BOOK confirms to such an extraordinary degree all that has been said by critics of the foreign policy of the United States during the World War that to paraphrase the story would weaken its force. If ever a man confirmed by his own words what his worst enemies have said of him, that man is former Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Instead of reviewing his memoirs, I should like to quote a few of the remarks that indicate the purpose and method of his political maneuvers:

> . . . I saw with apprehension the tide of resentment against Great Britain rising higher and higher in this country. It was becoming increasingly difficult to avoid bringing the controversies between our two governments to a head and to keep from assuming positions which went beyond the field of discussion. I did all that I could to prolong the disputes by preparing, or having prepared, long and detailed replies, and introducing technical and controversial matters in the hope that before the extended interchange of arguments came to an end something would happen to change the current of American public opinion or to make the American people perceive that German absolutism was a menace to their liberties and to democratic institutions everywhere. (Page 112.)

> While the United States was bound to protest against this violation by Great Britain of the established rule in regard to the opening and examining of sealed mail, I confess that it was done half-heartedly as a matter of form and with no intention to force the issue, because the British had strong reasons for their course of action. (Page 125.)

> . . . One of the chief reasons for Mr. Balfour's mission was to impress upon the President and the American government that Great Britain must have ships and money. . . . Great Britain had been compelled from the first to make large loans to her allies. In spite of her great wealth, this constant drain upon her treasury and credit had finally reached a point where further advances were practically out of the question as her own war expenses had increased to an extent that seriously threatened national bankruptcy. Money she must have to continue the war and she must also be relieved in some way from bearing the heavy burden of financing the other Allied Powers. . . . To the United States the Empire turned for relief from this increasing financial burden, which had grown to enormous proportions during the war. . . . It was almost pathetic to hear that fine old man appealing to us to come to the rescue of his country in its great need. (Pages 273-274.)

> Now that we were belligerents, we reaped the reward of the policy, which had been laid down in my memorandum of July 11, 1915, and which had been followed since that time. We adopted many of the measures of which we had complained. (Page 276.)

This celebrated memorandum, published for the first time some years ago in Julius W. Pratt's sketch of Lansing, read in part as follows:

> . . . Germany must not be permitted to win this war or to break even, though to prevent it this country is forced to take an active part. This ultimate necessity must be constantly in our minds in all our controversies with the belligerents. American public opinion must be prepared for the time, which may come, when we will have to cast aside our neutrality and become one of the champions of democracy.

Once he had achieved his objective of putting the United States into the War, Lansing's chief pleasure was to entertain visiting foreigners and get a pleasant thrill out of associating with the brass hats and stuffed shirts that were dispatched to cadge our money, supplies and men. Harold Nicolson once called Lansing "conceited" and Walter Hines Page (about whom Lansing has much to say that is damaging and true) could hardly endure his legalistic bent and incredibly bad literary style. Close reëxamination of the man on the basis of this book convinces me that he was merely a pompous mediocrity made important by his official position, and made sinister by his prejudices and aspirations. It is characteristic of him that with all his laboring to prove what a good soldier in the Allied army he was, he did not find room in his book for his letter of September 6, 1915, which was analyzed editorially in The New Republic for September 4, 1935. This was the letter in which he recommended loans to the Allies so that they could pay for American munitions. But Mr. Lansing would like us to forget about this letter. He wants us to keep on thinking that ideals are everything and that base economic considerations never soil the minds of American statesmen busy making the world safe for democracy and the du Ponts.

C. HARTLEY GRATTAN.

End of the Trail

Death in the Desert: The Fifty Years' War for the Great Southwest, by Paul I. Wellman. New York: The Macmillan Company. 308 pages. $3.

BY INCLUDING in this book sections on the Taos revolt of 1846, not entirely complete, and on the Modoc War of 1871-73, the author has attempted to make it a general treatise on the conquest of the desert regions of the Southwest (including California) by the North Americans, in so far as that conquest was of the Indians. But as a general history it falls down. To mention a few items, nothing is said of the Jicarilla Apache and Ute tribes; while the long series of campaigns against the powerful Navajos, culminating in Kit Carson's terrible reduction of them and the events that followed, are waved aside with a few casual and quite unreasonable remarks.

In fact, this book is about the conquest of the Southern Apaches by the white men, from the Copper Mine Massacre (of Indians), to the capture of Geronimo. One feels that some outside considerations of expediency led Mr. Wellman to include the other material and attempt to give his book greater scope, and one regrets it, since the space thus denied to his main subjects might well have been used to make "Death in the Desert" a truly remarkable history of the end of a remarkable people.

Even so, this is a book to recommend. For once a thoroughly popular, ordinary man's history of an Indian war has been written justly, giving Indians and white men alike their due. That Apache atrocities followed, in almost every case, upon atrocities of the first magnitude committed by whites; that these people were fighting a desperate war in defense of their liberty and homeland; that whenever we made peace with them we so furiously mistreated them that they could hardly help, being men, rising again—these facts

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are at last put where they are likely to be inserted into the minds of others than historians and ethnologists. That the Apaches were savages, and when once pushed into warfare, made it savagely, with great cruelty, is also clearly set forth. One takes their attacks on civilians more calmly these days; the attacks were sound from a military point of view, and we have swung around the circle ourselves—the inhabitants of "barbarous" Addis Ababa are deserting their capital because they know that the more civilized Italians will bomb it to pieces.

Most newspaper men turning to history, make a Sunday supplement out of it, and ignore accuracy. Mr. Wellman's well documented study is an exception. He starts off with a good deal of journalese—his Indians "look with beady eyes" (many Apaches have fine large eyes, the eyes of their young women are beautiful); leaders able in war are "vicious" and "sullen." But he gets out of this as his own interest and indignation mount, swinging into a colorful but not artificially colored narrative style, accurate, complete and reasonable.

It is too bad that he says nothing of what the Apaches were like when at home, of their amazing philosophy of the intellect in warfare, or of their subsequent development—that the San Carlos Apaches, for instance, have become one of the most promising, likable and progressive tribes. Much of the early part of Mr. Wellman's book, together with an astonishing analysis of Apache character, was covered some years ago by the late Will Levington Comfort in "Apache." That book disappeared, little known. It should be resurrected and read with this.

"Death in the Desert" should have a good sale, and I am glad of it. Whatever its faults, it gives an honest account of an important chapter in our history, hitherto the exclusive domain of liars and white apologists.

OLIVER LA FARGE.

What Marx Really Meant

Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's "Revolution in Science," by Frederick Engels. New York: International Publishers. 364 pages. $2.50.

Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's "Revolution in Science," by Frederick Engels. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company. 402 pages. $2.

IN THE 1870's Eugen Dühring, a lecturer at the University of Berlin, announced his conversion to socialism. Forthwith he proceeded to establish it on a new foundation by the publication of several volumes in which he promulgated final truths on everything in the universe, from cosmogony to education in the future society. The socialist leaders lent him a ready ear. From London, Marx and Engels viewed these proceedings with some anxiety, and Engels undertook the work of refuting him point by point.

Naturally Engels was not content with reducing the windy propositions of Dühring to absurdity, but proceeded to develop his own (and Marx's) positive views; it is the positive exposition that gives an enduring value to this polemical work. In Germany it has been republished in many editions, and more than one German Socialist theoretician has testified that the Marxian ideas had been more or less perplexing to him until they were made plain in the "Anti-Dühring." And now that after the lapse of more than half a century we are getting the book in an English translation—or rather in two translations—we may at least hope there will be no more attempts at telling us what Marx really meant and how to understand him.

It is rather late in the day to comment on the theories and opinions advanced in the "Anti-Dühring." I shall therefore confine myself to calling attention to some of its most salient points, without attempting to indicate the wealth of its contents. Concerning the never ending philosophical debate of free will and necessity, Engels accepts unreservedly Hegel's position: Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood. Freedom is insight into necessity. Freedom of the will is nothing more than the ability to make decisions with understanding of the problem; it is therefore a product of historical evolution. Man's freedom grows with his ability to control external nature as well as his own nature.

Another much argued question is that of human equality. How far and in what respects are human beings equal? Engels shows that the concept of human equality is also a product of historical evolution. The Middle Ages, with their hierarchical organization of society, completely denied it. It had a different content for classical antiquity in its various stages, for Christianity, and for the modern bourgeoisie. As for the proletarian demand for equality, its real content is the abolition of classes. Every demand for equality that goes beyond this, necessarily ends in absurdity.

The dialectic is discussed at considerable length, with many apt illustrations from mathematics, nature and society, particularly with reference to the principle of contradiction, the "three phases" and the relation of quantity to quality. For a later, more comprehensive treatment of the dialectic as a whole, and one more independent of the Hegelian terminology, I would refer to Engels' essay on Feuerbach. There the dialectic is presented as scientific method in its highest, most rigorous and exacting formulation.

The role of force in history is another question to which a considerable portion of the book is devoted. How far does force influence the course of history? On first view, all history is determined by force. On the other hand, certain bourgeois historical philosophers, revolting against the endless brutalities of past ages, denied the role of force altogether and asserted that intellectual progress alone shapes human destiny. The chapters devoted to this subject are among the most brilliant in this book. Engels' conclusion may be summed up in the statement that force prevails when it is applied in conformity with economic necessity, but fails when it is employed to stem that necessity's course. This furnishes a criterion, for example, by which to judge the ultimate outcome of the Communist revolution in Russia and the Fascist counter-revolution in Germany and Italy.

The section dealing with economics elucidates particularly Marx's theories of value, capital and surplus-value. In crises, Engels ascribes the principal role to overproduction, which is a modern phenomenon, while underconsumption—a pre-condition of crises—is as old as a society of classes. Marx contributes a chapter on the history of economic theory, in which the outstanding feature is the explanation of Quesnay's "Tableau Economique," the great riddle of early economic literature.

Of the two translations before us, Kerr's is entirely a domestic product, while the International Publishers' is an importation. The latter was translated by Emile Burns, edited by C. P. Dutt and printed in Russia. It hurts my patriotic pride, yet I am bound to admit that the Anglo-Russian product is much the superior of the two. It has hardly any errors and reads much more fluently. The Kerr edition also gives as an appendix Engels' essays on historical materialism and the medieval mark.

HERMAN SIMPSON.

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Ill Fares the Land

The Valley, by Nathan Asch. New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50.

TO BEGIN with the Valley was not a valley and spring there meant mud, "almost bottomless, almost hopeless." Barns in the Valley rotted, roofs leaked, woodchucks devoured the peas and beans, moles undermined the gardens, grass grew, then yellowed uncut, creeks and cider barrels ran dry in summer. The farmers bankrupt, their cattle sold and

> . . . only a few scrubs remaining no good to anyone . . . sons and daughters gone to the cities where there was work, lights, amusements; the ground overgrown with weeds, reclaiming what had been taken away from her two hundred years before; the stone fences slowly falling away . . . not a native soul, not a house or barn or horse or tool or harness, that was not old, that was not worn, not strained, not dying. . . . Everything that meant living was gone.

This is the Valley Nathan Asch describes in his latest volume. It is a section easily recognizable to all those who are acquainted with the submarginal hill farms of Southern New England, where sumac, sweet fern, gray birch—all the ragged and exuberant front ranks of new forests swarm down through the abandoned pasture lands, choking the gateways, clambering over the walls, smothering the springs and finally burying the old houses themselves when their rotting timbers give way and they topple into the gravepits of their empty cellars. It is a desolate, exhausted land, broken only here and there by open spaces of green lawns where gentry from the city seek with landscape gardening to maintain the dignity of an old farmhouse whose inmates have sold out or have at last been plowed under the stubborn and rocky soil.

Here and there one will find, too, a group of houses on some impassable back road, forgotten or still undiscovered by antique dealers. Here the last remnants of the rugged, horny-handed, thin-lipped wall builders of New England still scratch a poor living from their house gardens, drink their cider swiftly and in silence, hate their wives and die. They are the Prestons, the John Ferrises, the Jeremiah Akinses of this book, grim, crabbed men who have whacked brush all their lives, pitched hay through the roaring heat of a July noon, piled each spring's new crop of stones along the wall and in their moments of rest praised God or filled their skins with hard liquor. And now as they grow old and the underbrush, creeping down through their lots, has them at bay, they take to drink, they hang themselves, they drive their wives mad, they go mad themselves, or they sit cursing and snarling at the city people who buy up their land, cultivate little plots of sumac and cover the few remaining fertile meadows with artificial lakes.

Though Nathan Asch's book has no central plot—it is not a novel in the strict sense—the characters and the houses in which they live and die have the bond of common decay. They are people, or ghosts, or shadows of them in a doomed place. Their tragedy is not within them; it lies beyond their shuttered windows in the fields where stone walls drag their way through brambles and underbrush like animals seeking some hidden place to die in. With a deep sympathy, if not full insight, Asch has given the feeling of this final dissolution. He has understood the nature of the problem, for here there is no individual tragedy; it is the tragedy of rural New England. The soil is spent, drained of its strength by men who drained their own strength and that of their wives with the same silent ferocity. And now they have before them a rash of sumac spreading through their pastures, and a waste land.

SLATER BROWN.

Essays of Defeat

Don Fernando, or Variations on Some Spanish Themes, by W. Somerset Maugham. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company. 307 pages. $2.50.

DON FERNANDO, the keeper of a tavern in Seville who also dealt in curios, insisted on giving Somerset Maugham a sixteenth-century life of Loyola. After reading the book Maugham was seized by an unaccountable desire to write a picaresque novel of sixteenth-century Spain. He would make his picaroon a Catholic Scot with auburn hair, whose personality would be a combination of Loyola, Ponce de León and Agustín Rojas. He would consider his hero's spiritual life and have him listen to the lectures of Fray Luis de León and talk with those who had known Santa Teresa; he would have him attend the plays of Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón; and he would have El Greco paint his portrait.

Obviously such a book was not a project for a satirist of English manners and a student of the white man in the East. "Don Fernando" is a record of Mr. Maugham's failure, interspersed with some of the best and some of the worst writing he has ever done. His discussion of the Spanish dramatists, his chapters on Cervantes and El Greco, his sketches of Santa Teresa and Fray Luis de León, are examples of masterfully pointed prose. But his comments on Spain and the Spanish character are frequently trite, and his incidental discussions of art, literature and mysticism are repetitious as well. (For the third time in as many books he uses a glass of beer to symbolize one type of ecstasy.)

Throughout the book the reader is perplexed, as always by Maugham's writing, to know how it is the man can be so good without being good enough. He seems unable to sustain his brilliance. Toward the end of "Don Fernando" one comes upon what may be a clue to this troubling coexistence of genius and banality. In the gallery at Cadiz he writes of finding a group of pictures by Zurbarán. Of one of these, a portrait of the Blessed John Houghton, he writes: "It was a face of great distinction, thin as though from long fasting, and with a tenseness that was restless and eager. . . . I could not get the face out of my mind." Whenever he tried to draw his picaroon, the countenance of the Blessed John would interfere:

> I could see him smile dryly and a trifle superciliously. I could not imagine that he ever laughed out loud. I could imagine that he was capable of love, but not of sensuality. . . . I could not see him tumbling a serving wench on a bed or deceiving the lover of a pretty actress. . . . With his exquisite manners he kept the busy, bustling, sordid and picturesque world at arm's length.

This English monk is as much Maugham as the author of "Don Fernando." And just as Maugham's desire to recapture the gusto of the Golden Age is thwarted by the ascetic monk, so have his denials of the middle-class English virtues been canceled by his literary use of them as a standard. Excluding "Of Human Bondage" and the lesser though excellent "Moon and Sixpence," Maugham's nega-

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tive philosophy, a mixture of cynicism and pessimism, has never been strong enough or complete enough to counteract the "face of great distinction." His drama-satires and his comedies have been vitiated by the incompleteness of his refutation: he has never laughed out loud. His stories of the East and most of his novels have merely played at satiric illumination; their light has been dimmed by his realistic acceptance of the objects of his ridicule. He has smiled dryly and a trifle superciliously. His manners have been too exquisite.

LEIGH WHITE.

The Doubtful Esthetician

Concerning Beauty, by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr. Princeton University Press. 315 pages. $3.

PROFESSOR Mather disclaims any intention so pretentious as that of writing a systematic treatise on esthetics—such labors, he says, are apt to be "at once gaunt and stuffy." Instead, he wishes to achieve mainly "a thorough ventilation of the theme," which may, therefore, contain "some residuum of inconsistency and trial and error." And he does, indeed, release considerable daylight and fresh air into some of the musty chambers of esthetics.

On the other hand, Professor Mather's ventilation sometimes achieves air holes and cross currents of attitude transcending mere inconsistency to a degree that makes the book seem occasionally to be the work of different personalities. Sometimes we have a sentimental idealist of the arts, and sometimes a clear and penetratingly analytic expert; now a rather courtly gentleman elaborating periods of the old school in a manner not without charm, and again an emulator of the zippy iconoclast, exploding fallacies with up-to-the-minute allusions. He may refer to beauty as "that transcendent human activity . . . the most stable experience that human kind knows"; or he may suddenly remark that the stream-of-consciousness writers are "like Kerenskys and not like Lenins." Sometimes he is guilty of such bathos as the statement: "A devout person would hardly presume to say that the activities through which he appreciates the beauty of nature are identical or even closely analogous to the Divine activities in creation"; and then presently he is to be found cutting through a tangle of the high-flown nonsense with which numbers of people flatter themselves by doubting whether anyone has "ever really looked at, actually contemplated a picture or a statue for more than five minutes at a time." These people "have doubtless enjoyed something, presumably themselves," but this is "far different from enjoying the work of art."

In general, Professor Mather adheres closely to Dewey's orientation of the arts in living experience, as a continuous part of the organizing and adjustment that constructs meanings for us. Everything the artist "experiences tends to organize itself by analogy and extension into groups" constantly interrelating "in a world that, being always open and flexible, is progressively becoming of a wider and richer orderliness." It is strange that, accepting as he does this analysis of art as experience, he gets entangled in his chapter on "Esthetic Sympathy" in problems of the objective validity of beauty that grow meaningless from such an approach. And even stranger is his statement: "Nobody analyzes beauty while experiencing it, nor experiences it through analysis." An understanding acceptance of both Dewey's point of view and Professor Mather's own procedure before a work of art will reveal appreciation constantly leading to analysis, and analysis deepening and coloring appreciation.

EDGAR JOHNSON.

Books in Brief

The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford, edited by David Nichol Smith. New York: The Oxford University Press. 307 pages. $5.

THE IMPORTANCE of these fifty-one letters, written by Swift to one of his few intimate friends, is relatively slight except for its refutation of the now toppling theory that Swift was mentally unbalanced when he wrote "Gulliver's Travels." It sheds little or no light on the obscure places of Swift's life—his relations with Stella and Vanessa, the question of his impotence, the psychological reasons for his contempt for mankind. We learn from it that Swift shaved every other day, that he felt "in times like these it is impossible to keep politics from one's door," and that it was Ford who dropped the manuscript of Gulliver at the printer's; proving that Sir Walter Scott's guess was right. We also learn that Swift was writing his "Travels" by April 15, 1721, that he hated "Yahoos of both Sexes, and that Stella and Madame de Vilette are onely tolerable at best, for want of Houyhnhnms," and that the book was completed by August 14, 1725. On that date he wrote to Ford: "I have finished my Travells and I am now transcribing them; they are admirable Things, and will wonderfully mend the World." Mr. Smith, who is Merton Professor of English at Oxford, has done an admirable job of editing.

H. B.

Oliver Hazard Perry, by Charles J. Dutton. New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 319 pages. $3.50.

There seems to have been a genuine need for a new biography of the winner of the Battle of Lake Erie, for apparently the only one available hitherto has been an adulatory volume with many errors, written in 1840. Mr. Dutton's work is comprehensive in its treatment of the Perry family and its tradition of naval service. The early training of Perry himself is interestingly described, and the heart-breaking struggle to build, equip and man the fleet at Presque Isle is given in detail. New to many readers will be the story of the treachery of Elliott, commanding the "Niagara" until Perry made it his flagship in the heat of the battle, and new also, I think, will be the account of Perry's operations at Baltimore and along the Potomac at the time of the British assaults in those areas. But the present biography is only fairly written at best, and at worst is less than literate.

M. G.

Don't Believe It, Says the Doctor, by August A. Thomen, with a Foreword by Harlow Brooks. 40 East Forty-ninth Street, New York: The Author. 348 pages. $2.50.

If you believe that a clean tooth never decays, that goldenrod causes hay fever, that acute indigestion causes death, or that all cancers are incurable, this is the book for you. Dr. Thomen has painstakingly collected nearly 200 examples of popular medical fallacies relating chiefly to health and hygiene, various specific ailments from the common cold to cancer (but there is nothing on syphilis), food and diet, mental and nervous diseases, marriage, death and general superstitions. The result is a veritable miniature encyclopedia of medicine for the layman presented in a systematic and readable manner—although it is distinctly not to be used as a substitute for expert diagnosis and medical care.

H. W.

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OLIVER LA FARGE is president of the National Association on Indian Affairs and is a member of the Secretary of the Interior's Committee on Arts and Crafts. He is the author of two novels and a book of short stories.

SLATER BROWN, formerly on the staff of The New Masses, is now editing a labor paper.

LEIGH WHITE made an extensive study of Maugham as part of his college course. He is the author of a book on Mexico, "Miracles and Maize," and is now working on a play.

EDGAR JOHNSON is giving a course on satire at the New School for Social Research and also lectures on Esthetics there.

The initials signed to the brief reviews are those of Hamilton Basso, Murray Godwin and Harold Ward.

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STATE OF NEW YORK } ss
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Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and County aforesad, personally appeared Daniel Mebane, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of The New Republic and that the following is, to the best of his knewledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Law and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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